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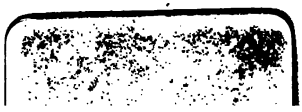

MEMORIALS

OF THE

MINISTRY OF G. V. WIGRAM.

VOL. I.

Notes on Scripture; Lectures and Letters.

SECOND EDITION.

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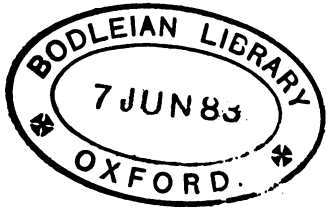
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PREFACE.

THE beloved late G. V. W. was a remarkable gift to the Church of God. His conversion was a striking one. He has written an account of it himself. He says:

"Good instructions as to the contents of the Bible were mine at school, at seventeen, under a John the Baptist ministry; but I never knew the gospel till, at nineteen, I went abroad, full of the animal pleasures of a military life. I and my comrade spent a long and tiring day on the field of Waterloo in June, 1824. Arriving late at night at ——, I soon went to my bedroom. It struck me, 'I will say my prayers.' It was the habit of childhood, neglected in youth. I knelt down by my bedside; but I found I had forgotten what to say. I looked up as if trying to remember, when suddenly there came on my soul a something I had never known before. It was as if some One, Infinite and Almighty, knowing everything, full of the deepest, tenderest interest in myself, though utterly and entirely abhorring everything in, and connected with me, made known to me that He pitied and loved myself. My eye saw no one; but I knew assuredly that the One whom I knew not, and never had met, had met me for the first time, and made me to know that we were to-

gether. There was a light, no sense or faculty my own human nature ever knew; there was a presence of what seemed infinite in greatness—something altogether of a class that was apart and supreme, and yet at the same time making itself known to me in a way that I as a man could thoroughly feel, and taste, and enjoy. The Light made all light, Himself withal; but it did not destroy, for it was love itself, and I was loved individually by Him. The exquisite tenderness and fulness of that love, the way it appropriated me myself for Him, in whom it all was, while the light from which it was inseparable in Him, discovered to me the contrast I had been to all that was light and love. I wept for a while on my knees, said nothing, then got into bed. The next morning's thought was, 'Get a Bible.' I got one, and it was thenceforward my handbook. My clergyman companion noticed this, and also my entire change of life and thought.

"We journeyed on together to Geneva, where there was an active persecution of the faithful going on. He went to Italy, and I found my own company—stayed with those who were suffering for Christ.

"I could quite now, after fifty years' trial, adopt to myself these few lines, as descriptive of that night's experience:

> "Christ, the Father's rest eternal,
> Jesus once looked down on me,
> Called me by my name external,
> And revealed Himself to me.
> With His whisper, light, life giving,
> Glowed in me, the dark and dead;
> Made me live, Himself receiving,
> Who once died for me and bled."

His ministry, like his conversion, was of no ordinary kind. Like the precious stones on Aaron's breastplate, it sparkled with the varied beauties and glories of the Person of the living, glorified Christ—Christ as Son of man and Son of God. The Christ of God was his one theme. Whatever might be the Scripture preached from, the truth unfolded was always exhibited as some ray of His glory. This was the feature of his earlier, whatever his larger spiritual apprehensions in after years, as well as of his later ministry. It was, on this account, ministry of the highest kind—of the highest kind, because it bore the evident stamp of the Holy Spirit, who (said our blessed Lord) "shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 14.)

Nor can it be forgotten that his life (as those who knew him most intimately testify) equally with his ministry was characterized by the power of the Spirit of God. In one of his addresses he says, "The first impression on my heart when converted was, 'Enoch *walked* with God.' That was my start. 'Now then,' I said, 'I will walk with God.' Beautiful as far as it went; but I very soon found, as Luther said to Melancthon, 'You will find old Melancthon stronger than young Philip.' I came to my wits' end, for I wanted a fund whence to draw so as to live it out." He found that fund; for he goes on to say, "You are unable to live out of resources in yourself—you must not act as though your life is separate; CHRIST must be the fountain." At a meeting, also, in London, he once said, "It is all very well to get the heavenly side of truth; but let me remind you that this alone will not do, for nothing will com-

pensate for lack of *walking with God.*" This indeed, it may be safely averred, was the prominent feature of his spiritual life. And most blessed is it when the testimony of the lip is confirmed by, and finds its counterpart in, the walk and conversation. It is in such a combination that God is most abundantly glorified.

It was but natural therefore that those who had known the life and ministry of this servant of God, and had glorified God in him, should have desired that some written record of his ministry should be preserved, judging that the Lord might still use it for the comfort and strengthening of the souls of His people in this day of confusion and departure from the truth. Abundant materials were found—much in his own hand-writing, and much in faithful, though fragmentary, notes of his lectures and addresses. Not only his representatives, who have undertaken the publication, and those who have been charged with the responsibility of selecting and arranging, but also the whole Church of God, will be the debtors of those who have so readily responded to the request for material.

After much prayerful consideration it has been decided to publish two volumes. The contents of the first (the present) comprise—Notes on Scripture, transcribed from G. V. W.'s own Note Book; Lectures and Gospel Addresses, with a few Letters. The second, to be published shortly, if the Lord permit, will consist wholly of matter written by G. V. W. himself for publication. Some of these papers are critical—written to illustrate the character of the Hebrew moods and tenses. They

are, however, made very simple, and exemplified in new translations. C. E. S. has most kindly undertaken the revision of this part of the work. The remaining papers are on ecclesiastical subjects, and were issued in the colonies. They are most valuable, being an exposition of the principles of the Church of God, in its constitution, regulation, and discipline.

It only remains to express the earnest hope and prayer that it may please God to use these volumes for His own glory in the edification of His Church.

E. D.

SEVENOAKS, KENT.

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PART FIRST.

NOTES ON SCRIPTURE

Part First.

NOTES ON SCRIPTURE.*

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep." (Gen. i. 1, 2.)

I learn from this, that "in the beginning," before heaven or earth existed, there was "God who created" them, that it was He who originated them. I learn, too, that at first, "the earth was formless and void;" and also that "darkness was upon the face of the deep."

How long ago was that? I know not; nor how long it lasted. That which God wrote, I receive and consider to be *fact*, not fiction.

God's written word then adds (at the close of *v.* 2), "And the Spirit of God moved over" (that which I knew not before to have existed) "the face of the waters."

From internal evidence, in the difference between that which precedes, and that which follows after (apparently a new subject) from verse 3, I have the *impression* that this portion is as the close of that which precedes it; and is not the commencement of what follows afterwards. But impression takes its place in my mind, and is a very

* This section is transcribed from the writer's note-book, written during his last illness, and although fragmentary, the notes bear traces of repeated correction and revision.—Ed.

different thing from what is a fact in God's presence, received by me, otherwise ignorant of it; but now accrediting it as a reality, because of a plain and definite statement made by God and written in His word. I am sure that God wrote it, and I receive it; but I wait for fuller light ere I can speak of the connection of that fragment rather with what precedes, or with what follows it.

Creation (the creation of the heaven and the earth), and the ordering of the Adamic heaven and earth (and the account of which we then have), are two distinguishable things, and might have been at two distinguishable times. I might, indeed, add a third thing; for it is written: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? . . . . Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . . Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof, When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job xxxviii. 2, 4, 6, 7.)

Here, while addressing Job, a man on earth, God names sons of God as having been present, and expressed their delight, when the foundation of the earth was made fast, and the corner-stone laid. There were then some intelligent creatures, heavenly beings (and they do not appear to have darkened counsel with words without knowledge), that witnessed the preparation of earth for man.

The *first* of the two things named above is creation of the heaven and the earth.

The *second* is, from verse 3 onward, the ordering and arranging the *Adamic* earth according to the Mosaic account.

Between these (*the first*, and *the second*), if twelve millions of years existed for the geologist to explore the remains, in any order which investigation may discover to him, nevertheless he gets the origin of that state from

God, through Moses; as also is the continuation of the account of the ordering and arranging of the earth as a residence for man.

But if there be a parenthesis or gap which is void, let us be cautious and humble; for it is guess-work *at best*, when man has nothing but his own observations, and not facts stated by God, to go upon.

Let him take heed lest he overlook this possible hiatus, and create a world for himself, and accuse God falsely, objecting to a Bible written with a specific object (not geology), just because he does not see this hiatus. I object not to observations; but I do altogether to the proud spirit which sets fallen man's observations above revelation made by God.

Blindness in many has, through their self-satisfaction, hindered their seeing this possible gap; many of them have overlooked, too, the difference of things observed, and the accounting for them; and degraded both themselves and the study of existent nature. Of this globe's duration, whatever changes may have taken place upon it, we have the testimony of men that were competent to gather evidence about it, that it had run a course of something like 4,000 years ere the Christ was born: this with 1878 since, and the certified statement of the only One that knows futurity, that He, the Christ, shall reign over it for 1,000 years, leads, as do various texts, to the thought common to many of a 7,000 years' course for it.

He that reads what God has written, must divide between impressions formed in his own mind, and observations of his own, and that of which he can say: "But *this is written.*" Otherwise he will give his impressions as though they were prophecies by God.

יהוה (Jehovah), abstractedly, "the self-existent" *in relationship with man;* it includes God manifest in flesh, the Mighty One, Jehovah's fellow, now at the tip-top of everything in ascension, heavenly glory, and the whole system one with Himself in and by God the Holy Spirit, through the blood of the Lamb. (1 Peter i. 14–25.)

[TRUE children's walk; careless children's correction. To us all obvious.]

Government (the thought running through both epistles of Peter) may bring in profession upon earth, true or false; and also the earthly side, of which we are not, but which is ours as parts of the bride and the wife. He and His; all is ours!

THERE is more room in Christ, in God, in heaven, to give me rest and peace and joy, than in the whole universe to disquiet, trouble, and grieve me. But the Holy Spirit alone can fill me with it.

BELOVED of God the Father, and of the Son, to whom He gave you, and who loves you as Abba's gift to Himself, and in token thereof has given you of His Spirit.

AND if God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, fills the eye, there will be no seething-pot within us of turmoil, fear, or hard thoughts. God for me; and the Anointed Man crowned with honour and glory at His right hand. God made Him to be a sin-offering for us, and now we are become the righteousness of God in Him.

'Tis the law of the *Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*, which has made me free from the law of sin and death.

And it is the very Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which originates all the expressions in and from us; for we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory. 'Tis the Spirit moves us (not we who move the Spirit, save, alas! when we grieve Him). It is the Spirit who is the whole power of life in us, and suggests each thought which is according to Scripture, feeds each affection in the renewed heart with Scripture, and changes us into the same image of Christ from glory to glory. Self (flesh) is enmity to Him, and is in contrast with the Spirit.

Isaiah xxvi. 12.

"Lord, thou wilt ordain (adjudge) peace for (to) us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us," is a wonderful testimony for us.

It is not by striving to evoke life in our bodies that we act, unless something be very wrong in us or our circumstances. A mother's love comes towards her first-born at its birth, and her actions will flow out to it, according to the measure of intelligence and strength which she has.

It is among the praises of any aged saint, "having known Him that is from the beginning" (1 John ii. 13, 14), to rest in Him, have Him as the refuge, from which they see all above, all around, all within, and all below.

Grace which has forgiven the sins of all of the household of the Father (*v.* 12); of fathers, young men, and babes; names, in addition to this universal characteristic of the family, three others distinctive of the three several

classes in the family, thus: "The fathers have known Him that is from the beginning." "The young men have overcome the wicked one." "The babes have known the Father." Then the Spirit goes on to the practical exhortative part. But the fathers' herein is practically knowing Him that is from the beginning (*v.* 14), and the young men have their reminding, cheering, and exhortation (*vv.* 14 and 17), and the babes too. (*vv.* 18–27.)

All sins forgiven to all. But the aged having learnt in the nursery, and in the battle of life according to the privileges and experiences of the family, now "have known Him that is from the beginning." What a rest to those that prove they are of this class, by being practically shut up therein. All the subtle guile and antichristian workers, all the liars denying the Father and the Son; the unction of the Holy One and the eternal life, and the teaching of the Spirit, shown to them as babes, made the abiding in Him to be safety. The young men's lessons too, different from the babes, they had learnt. And their distinctive privilege and lesson was, having known Him that is from the beginning.

As one thing after another arises from Satan, or from our darkness within; from around us in the world, or from our own unrestrained energy, the test, "Is this of Him that is from the beginning?" "What place has He relatively to this?" gives light. And if I am in Him that is from the beginning, and know Him, it marks my path for me; and truly a most blessed path is that which has Him that is from the beginning, for the beginning, middle, and end of it, and of all the circumstances by the way, and of one's own self too. Gracious the love that has made it mine; may I walk and abide in it.

"I HAVE waited for thy salvation, O Lord." (Gen. xlix. 18; Isa. xxv.)

When Jacob called his sons to hear what should befall them in the last days, he marked out also what in the histories of each struck him. To him doubtless the blots in their lives leading to failure were very humbling; but he was holy in doing so. He seems to have seen the family in its unity in the last days, and in the future of those who pleased God all would come out. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," appears to have been outbreaking from his soul about himself.

He who had been called Jacob (laid hold of the heel) had had many tricks and unseemly ways of making short cuts to the blessing, which were none of them of God, nor profitable to himself. His confidence all seemed to break down at Jabbok, and he found that a cry to God was his secret of blessing when his name was changed to Prince with God—"Israel."

He had had to wait for Jehovah's deliverance of him, and Jehovah had never failed to deliver him. Perhaps what he had just said about Dan, "A serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward," naturally evoked the expression of whom he had found to be his Deliverer.

If any one turns to Isaiah xxv. they will find part of the vision before the Holy Spirit's mind, larger, and broader, and fuller than what Israel saw, but part and parcel truly of the then dying patriarch's outbreathing. (*v.* 9.) "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

THE UNITY OF SCRIPTURE.

THE Bible as one book (the only one written by God, and one wherewith none can be set in comparison) gives as a whole the only full truth about the gospel. God in His being, and own estate, and character, and attributes, set in contrast with man in his origin, and constitution, and place, and character.

More might be made of this in teaching, I judge to advantage, than has been done. Creation, providence, government, but most of all eternal redemption and salvation for eternity, each gives its tribute of light. And the revelation not only of God as Creator and Upholder and Governor, but the glories of these, all displayed by the Son, and brought out to light by the Holy Spirit, are in blessed contrast with man, who sold his inheritance, ruined himself, and being under Satan (God's adversary), and in the flesh, got a world of sin and death and judgment for his posterity to share with himself outside the paradise or Eden made for man by Him on whom he had turned his back. And yet ere the turning out of Eden, man heard of a better state of things—of the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head. The light of hope thus shone out amid darkness.

MATTHEW xiii.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

THIS was in the apostles' minds, and their measure of light in Acts i. 6. But the word for then, was the promise of the Father. And the mind of Jesus was upon being made Lord and Christ, and shedding abroad of what came out at Pentecost; and this, not as King of Israel, but for

the glory of God and the blessing of man, and as showing out the depth of the riches of God's mercy and wisdom, while the King of Israel was rejected.

It is as Lord and Christ that He originates the Pentecostal blessing, and as Lord and Christ it is that the closing of that new blessing will be in 1 Thessalonians iv.—His love drawing Him forth then a second time to come from off the throne eternal, but now as the anointed Man. And He will come and glean up all His sleeping ones (even those whose death was not judgment, but rest), and snatch up those that are alive and remain here till His coming.

And not as King of Israel does Scripture represent Him in Revelation v.–ix., though acting for Israel. From the throne of the Lord God Almighty His actings flow, whether of power against adversaries, or as preparing for a new season of blessing.

The kingdom will have a King when it is set up. 1 Cor. xv., Dan. vii. show that. But who will be the bride, the Lamb's wife? and where her place?

The heavenly saints now gathering are to be the wife of the Lamb, and in the place on high, her abode, as the court of the kingdom below. They above as the habitation of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.

Colossians.

The testimony of Epaphras to Paul was, that they had love in the Spirit. (i. 18.) This is the only mention of the Spirit in the epistle.

And yet the epistle is a specimen of the presence and power of the Spirit most remarkably; first, in the way that the apostle sees everything that he writes as himself

being in the Spirit, and so sees everything on God's side of it, and Christ's, and not man's earthly side.

And, secondly, in the extraordinary range of the truth as brought out by him. Be it they had come short of apprehending that most precious part of the Ephesian truth of the mystery; viz., "seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and that they were still therefore afloat about many things, the adversary too harassing them. The Spirit knew the inward truth of the mystery, and its settings, and connection with Christ, and the Son of the Father. Paul had alluded to them in his letter to the Ephesians, but had not opened them out in detail, as here. The Spirit of God moves Paul now to go into the details, in particular as to the glories, external and internal, of this Son of God.

Truth given in Col. i. 15–20 and ii. 9, 10 has a most transcendent height about it; and that in ii. 14 to iii. 4, a depth as answering the evil present truly marvellous.

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1 Timothy ii. 1.

The service and office which here we find our God and Saviour puts upon us, ought to be noticed by us and acted upon.

Making "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for *all men*."

God watches over the earth, and sees the needs of man, as such; and the fruits of His covenant given to Noah, are part of the blessing. But thankless man sees Him not who is the giver, sees Him not who causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and gives rain to the just and to the unjust.

In the needs of men around us, even amid God's judg-

ments, we are to be those who can in heart and act connect the griefs with the ear and mind of God, so fulfilling a service of privilege to Him. And, as the unseen hand pours out its rich blessings on the world as such, we are to turn ourselves to be givers of thanks.

Prayer too is called for in behalf of God's agents of government—"For kings, and all that are in authority;" the end, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

The call is not to pray for *our* monarch, as some suppose, so individualizing the matter to ourselves, and putting ourselves into a false position as to the powers that be. The exhortation is as to God's ordinance of government of the world by the sword of a Cæsar, or any other, and our own God in it, and we are to pray for all such upon earth, that all (we) saints may be quietly and peaceably governed.

If God has committed the word of His grace to me, I can well commit it and myself, in whom it dwells, to the hand of the Lord. Little, Lord God, am I among thy people upon the earth; but the message sent by thy risen Son, through Mary, has reached unto me. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God."

A word—and I cannot either deny or reduce it to barrenness—most precious. The risen and ascended Lord Jesus owns us as brethren, and has communicated to us, as such, that His Father is our Father, and His God is our God. This is known in heaven above as reality, on which He acts, as light of the most precious kind.

"THOU God seest me!" Before thee I walk according to Christ Jesus. Thou wilt enlarge and make more comprehensive my knowledge of Him in the Spirit.

To give up what thou wouldst have me to be without, and to take up what thou wouldst have me to be in, or upon me, be this, through grace, my service to thyself, Father of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

I HAVE a Saviour. He is in heaven and I upon earth. He has saved, is saving, and will save me from all that He can find to save me from, until, having saved me from and through all, He will safely deliver me up faithfully to Him who entrusted me to Him, to be my Saviour, even His Father and God. Possessed of such an One, I need to have nothing in mine own hand.

I have a Saviour! Yes! I have not only a Saviour God, but God has given to me the Christ, His Christ, and He is my Saviour.

In what details, O God! my God! (in and through Jesus Christ), wilt Thou this day enable me to work out with fear and awe, the deep sense of Thy presence and nearness upon me, mine own deliverance.

For verily it is Thou only that energisest in us the being, willing, and acting energetically, according to Thine own good pleasure. (Phil. ii.)

"NOT by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. iv. 6.) When the angel of the Lord was conversing with Zechariah, he said, "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, Not by might," &c.

'Tis well for any vessel that the Lord may be using, or that may be waiting on the Lord, if haply He will use him, to bear this in mind. All the might and power, when the Lord is working towards works of grace among men, is by His Spirit. It is good too for the vessel to

receive and treasure up the negative *not*, as applied to himself. Resurrection power working amid death around and within ourselves is what *we have to count upon.*

WITHOUT controversy that which we find in Paul's letter to the Colossians is strange. A people of whom he could say, Crucified together with Christ, dead together with Him, and buried together with Him, alive again through Him, certainly no longer in the grave where He lay; but not ready to say, "Seated together in heavenly places in Him." The knowledge of the first five things was most important, as means to an end. But the holders of them were still afloat, moved to and fro—they knew not the anchor, sure and steadfast, dropt within the veil. The state of any such now involves an ignorance of the person of the Lord, and a disparagement of Himself and His glories (not known to them yet as real), and of the nature of His salvation, and of His supreme pre-eminence.

The way in which the apostle deals with them, in introducing afresh the higher glories of the Lord, and pointing out the effects of their dividing any part of the truth from His person, are important.

What they had heard and received, was all about God, and the Anointed Man, and what was in Him. (Col. ii. 9, 10.) "In Him dwelleth all the fulness (plerōma) of the Godhead bodily."

The positive fulness of the infinite personal Deity abode in Him. And what had they in Him? All that there was in Him; with that they were fully filled, according to the thoughts of God in Paul.

Chap. i. 19. "For all the fulness"—a positive thing that left nothing that was good out—"was pleased to dwell in

Him." All that there was in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as God dwelt there; so that He could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Such was His pre-eminence, and to every part of His work this attached (for His works all grew out of Himself)—His obedience unto death, the death of the cross; His being laid in the grave; taking life afresh; leaving the chamber of the dead, and taking His seat on high, bidden to do so of God, on the throne of the Majesty in the highest. Did one part belong to any, and not all? Was His love not theirs? not upon them? Had He not loved the Church, and given Himself for it? Had He not as a present object to sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word? Was not all part of a plan to issue in His presenting it to Himself a Church in glory, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but to be holy and without blemish?

He does not write, you admit, five grand truths in Christ, but overlook a sixth. That would be a human way of working. He does not write that they were nothing without that, so far as ability, the present need; for he had begun with their love in the Spirit, and of their having been made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, whom God had delivered also from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. He names too, not only this fulness, but also His being the image of the invisible God (chap. i. 15), pre-eminent to all; the Creator of all powers, whether in heaven or earth; the upholder of everything in its own proper place for Himself, &c. He speaks then (*v.* 18) of Him as the Head of the body—the Church; the Resurrection One, in whom alone is life.

There was no life save in Christ; and if any one did

not hold Christ the Head, in whom alone was life—the more they did hold the worse for them—surely they were beguiled; and surely the to and fro movement of those beguiled must hinder their living to God alone.

And then (chap. iii. 1) he quietly takes advantage of the admitted fact of their being risen with Christ, to urge them to seek things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and to be steadily occupied with things above, not on things on earth; for you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, you also shall appear with Him in glory. Thus only self could be set aside by them, and living out of the world, they would not walk as men of it.

I do not know any scripture which more insists on rest in Christ as the spring of the new life, through the fulness which is ours through faith in Him.

ROMANS viii. 1.

No condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Verse 2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," &c.

That which God has appointed as an efficacious, continuous action, is a law. The law of night and day, of the phenomena in the heavenly bodies, of seasons, days, and years, is given to us in Genesis i.; see also viii. 22.

The law given through Moses is the efficacious, continuous action upon man as a creature, when fallen, of the righteous requirements of the Creator over and from man.

The law of day and night is an appointment of God. The law of Moses is inseparable from the relationship of a self-existing Creator, and His creature man.

He made man for His own glory. If man has subserved

that, good; if not, what then? The curse, if I am the rebel against the insulted God, is all that my own state and my position authorize me to expect.

But the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is quite another from the law of Moses. 1st. It sets me free from it. Am I in Christ Jesus? Is He the Anointed Man? Jehovah the Saviour, is He to be cursed for having me in Him? All His dependent obedience unto death, is it to be ignored? And all the merits in Him which led God to award to Him a place at His own right-hand on the throne as Son of Man, and He able there to display God's delight in perfect obedience—is all that to be set aside, and made nothing of because of my demerit, because I deserve the hottest place in hell for my having served Satan, and because I have no fitness of my own for any other place than that? None, certainly, of my own for God's presence. But He has won that place already; has been in it 1800 years, and God cannot repent of that. It is the expression of His own righteousness. It is His vindication of Himself; and the showing of His reasons for His silence when the wicked said, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God."

Either I must pull Him down to my low level, or He, through His work, will raise me to His level. And mark it now, O my soul! I have already the Spirit of life in Him. He is not merely as a rock hiding me in a cleft, but I have the Spirit of life *in me*, to which the law attaches freedom, not from condemnation only, but from the law of sin and death.

The *Spirit of life* in Christ Jesus has *its* law, and sin and death have *their* law, and the former sets free from the latter. Moreover, what was lacking has been supplied;

for God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, and condemned sin in the flesh. There was the Sin-bearer; there the Man who knew no sin (no other such has there ever been among men), Seed of the woman, holy, harmless, apart from sin, had the sentence against sin executed upon Him, and (*v.* 4) with special object of writing love to God and man upon the hearts and minds of all those who are partakers of that *nature of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus;* and so it is with us. If we stood upon our being men, then we should have to honour self, and walk according to it, and so have our minds occupied with the things of men down here. Many a one has tried that, the trying to draw out from self what God would like. Many I have known to do so even after they have known this (Rom. viii.), and the solemn warning not to go to the broken cistern, but to the well with its living water—water which only becomes cooler and fresher in the proportion in which it is drawn from. No; my standing is not according to the law of Moses, as if my standing were in flesh; but it is in Spirit—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; and being according to this law free, I mind the things of the Spirit. To try to lop off sins and to appropriate graces, as we see in the Colossians under law of Moses, is a very different way from our way; for under the Spirit of the Lord there is liberty. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

Verse 6. The flesh's mind, death; the Spirit's mind, life and peace. For flesh's mind, enmity against God. How simple! The mind of man (fallen) is not, cannot be, subject to the righteous requirements of the Creator; it

cannot be so. So, then, my standing and abiding there cannot please God. To say they can involves no less than this, that God cultivates flesh and the fallen man.

Verse 9. No, we are not standing there; we are not as ruined creatures looking up to see what the Creator will do with the ruined creature which has not and cannot meet His most just and holy requirements. Brought into existence to subserve His glory, we have not done so. We are not there, or we should not have the Spirit of God dwelling in us. This Spirit characterizes our standard. God has wrought, and we have His Spirit—Spirit of the anointed Man—or we are none of His; but having that there is a law—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus—and that sets us free from the other.

Verse 10. The effect of this, Christ being in us, is (however sure of blessing) now deeply humbling; for it declares the *body to be dead** because of sin.

Before it was said we were set free from the law of sin and death, this was meant as to the condemnatory power of Moses over us. *Here* our bodies are declared to be dead because of sin directly we come to Christ in us. Out of that pit no pure water will rise—nothing like Christ in my human body; and I know it directly I know Christ in me. But if the body is dead, the Spirit is life, because of the establishment of righteousness.

Perhaps (*vv.* 9, 10) Christ is the Anointed Man as the object set before us—Christ by faith, as we have it in Eph. iii.; and the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit. But Spirit of God (*v.* 9), Spirit of Christ (*vv.* 9, 10), and Spirit (*v.* 9) are to be marked.

Verse 11. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from among the dead does dwell in us, then He that

* The reader will weigh this interpretation for himself.—ED.

raised up Christ from amid the dead will also quicken, or give life, to our mortal bodies by [because of] His Spirit which dwells in us.

Verse 12. We owe the flesh nothing; good we never got from it; it has no claim to our living according to it. If we do, our path will end in death. If through the Spirit (through whom are all our benefits) we mortify it, that is an action of life, leading to life. Then too we shall know, that being led by the Spirit of God, we are the sons of God; born of Him, and having received authority or right and power to become sons.

The characteristics of the Spirit on our side, as it were, are then gone into, even of Him who is named the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit.

Verse 15. He is not one characterized by bondage and servile fear. We have received Him, and know that of Him. On the contrary, He whom we have received is the Spirit of sonship or adoption, and we learn to cry without a thought, Abba, Father.

Verse 16. And Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. Note the double and concurrent witness of the Holy Spirit Himself, and of our own spirits as children, for it is important. Such as to present privilege. Then as to hope (*v.* 17): "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs together with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" with Him. This does the apostle write by the Spirit for our fullest confirmation in these precious privileges and hopes. The contrasts of the Spirit as looked at, on the one hand, God's side, or on ours, are to be noticed. "The *Spirit of God*," as to nature and power; *Spirit of Christ*, as to that part of glory being revealed—not now creation, providence, government, but Himself—

God manifested in flesh, the Mighty One, Jehovah's Fellow, making good and revealing as a man, expiation, righteousness, and thus eternal salvation and redemption; on the throne, now our Deliverer and Saviour, and shortly our Glorifier. God the Spirit, and Spirit of God, and of the Anointed One personally indwelling us.

On the other hand, He is the efficacious power of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." (*v.* 2.) Walking according to whom, instead of according to ourselves, we get to be God's freemen. Good self is more dangerous in this case than bad self, because the former really turns its back upon gracious power and salvation, as being in another than itself, and looks to hold its Adamic position, which it has lost, and would fain cultivate innocency and perfect conformity of self, as a creature toward the Creator, and is self-deceived. The deception is patent. If its course were good in God's eyes, and not only in its own, God Himself would still be cultivating the Adamic nature and flesh, man's own fallen self. But He is not doing so at all, but gives over a man like Paul to see what, and where, the real difficulty is in Rom. vii. 24; viz., that he was a ruined creature, needing deliverance for himself. Thus he is carnal. sold under sin; "not allowing that which I do; I will to do one thing, but do it not; but what I hate, that I do; if I do what I would not, I consent to the law that it is good. It is not I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. Surely in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing, if to will is present with me, but that I cannot find how to perform that which is good; the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do. (*v.* 20) Now if I do that I would not, it is not I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (21) There is now a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. (22) For I de-

light in the law of God after the inward man: (23) but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (24) O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Intellectual clearness in a heathen philosopher of old could see the marks of one mind and plan and character, who thereupon confessed to the unity of Godhead. But while standing firm to that, and put to death for it, he did not see his own folly, if there was but one Supreme Being, in himself bidding his disciples to sacrifice a cock, as vowed by him to Esculapius.

Romans vii. clearly came after Acts ix. Saul was converted to, and by Christ, before he wrote to the Romans, or had to study the two minds which are brought before us in Romans vii. Fallen man is Satan's slave, and while intellect can see and argue upon the relative positions of Creator and creature, just claims and requirements of the Creator and the utter ruin of the creature, will is stirred within us; power in us over ourselves there is none. The answer and cure are in another. All the groanings about self are all met and put aside directly we turn from self and our circumstances to Jesus Christ our Lord. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (*v.* 25.) The grand lesson in all this seems to me to be this, that there are two minds in man, according to the standing he takes; either that of a creature under its Creator, looking at itself according to the flesh, or that of a ruined sinner cast upon the Saviour God and the salvation of Christ. The law of Moses attends the former, the latter goes after Christ, and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. A man may intellectually weigh the two, until almost insane confusion fills him.

But no one can get into freedom upon the first position until he knows two things; first, how to say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has made me free from the law of sin and death;" and, secondly, that the standing, and life flowing from it, sets the expiation of sin over against the law of sin and death that remains in us, and will remain, and be remembered by us, until we see Him Himself, and are made like Him, seeing Him as He is.

Many a badly-taught Christian passes through the bewildering conflict, ere he at all knows clearly about this law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus making the believer free, and the judgment passed upon Him who was holy, harmless, sinless, being the condemnation upon Him of sin which is in us. It did reign; it still indwells, and will, until the Saviour comes back with His salvation, and takes it out of us.

Chap. viii. 10. To be earnestly looking forward as one awaiting God's Son from heaven I should not be watching mine own shadow behind me: "I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. iii. 15.)

Chap. viii. 11. God is light. In God's light I see light, for I see Christ there; and there too I learn in contrast to Him whatever is darkness in or immediately around me. How long until Christ shall be come? Give me a strong, bright lamp in a passage before me, and I shall not be able to tell you the distance. What is that if the heart loves Him who is coming, and is spending itself in shortening the intervening space? And when He does rise up to come forth, then will He recommence displays of new glories to bring Israel back to their land, &c.,

when we are satisfied in His presence, and with His likeness.

Nevertheless, the sooner He comes the better; and though when we think of His service and people we ought to be able to deny ourselves, and for His people's sake stay on, yet if our hearts are fresh to Him, it were self-denial and constraint the staying. How few are in that state, that of being in a strait between two things—the better for them to depart and be with Him, the more expedient for His people to stay and work. Do see whereabouts you are, my reader, in this matter. 2 Cor. v. gives the other side—I groan after the glory, and desire to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

But why are we not to look straight up from where we are to where He now is sitting at the right hand of God? This would warm the heart to Him, and let light into us, as to the dirt of the place where we are.

"We see Jesus," wrote Paul (Heb. ii.), as if his eye beheld Him, "crowned with glory and honour." Himself seen anywhere causes all else connected with man to drop into a secondary place. Paul wrote thus about Him, and having attained to the fulfilment of Psalm viii., He (Jesus) entered and sat down on the throne, all things put under His feet, and thus become the securer to His people of all things being put under theirs.

Chap. viii. 11. It is a simple fact, which people think very little of, even believers; but it is truth. *A man* in glory in heaven is a truth dear to the heart and mind of God. Of course, you may say, the Lord Jesus is there now on the throne of the Majesty of the highest, and will bring His heavenly bride thither hereafter.

Yes; but I was thinking of Enoch having been translated without seeing death. He has been on high from

before the deluge; and again, the prophet was seen going up as in a chariot of fire; and again, that when Christ died, not only was the "veil of the temple rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (Matt. xxvii. 51–53.) This, I suppose, is referred to in Col. ii. 15.

Some consign these to the grave again. I dare not do so, unless it were written. Sure I am I have no wish, as parent to such a thought, to originate it.

ENOCH, a man in all things like myself, in glory now well-nigh 4,000 years; Elijah, a man like him, and like me, there on high for now some 3,000. These as items and details throw out the matter pointedly to my mind, and helpfully too in my littleness.

The Christ was the last Adam, life-giving Spirit.

We were ruined sinners.

He gives to the believer, or receiver of God's word, eternal life; having taken Himself, at Golgotha, the whole penalty of sin from the hand of God.

Why does the Christ love the Church? It is not for me to attempt to answer this in full, but a word or two may be well, if written modestly. The question rises in various minds from various causes. If the facts of the Christ being the only-begotten Son of the Father on the one hand, and Son of God on the other, are simply present to the mind, it would seem to me natural for a person to say, "God is love," and "As is God, so is the Christ." He has a being of His own quite unlike mine, and a character as

Son of God: a right, therefore, to love; a right to express His own character, which is love.

God draws His motives from within Himself, not from that which is below Him: so the Son of God likewise. But as the only-begotten Son of the Father, how should He but delight in the pleasure and purpose of God and the Father to bring many sons to glory? How should He but love those chosen in Him? How but love us as gifts of God to Him; and instead of what we were, or are, or yet may be, occupying His mind so as to make Him disparage such poor gifts—the less the gift in itself, more store to Him in its being a gift to Him; and given to Him as the expression of confidence in Him, as able to bring the many sons to glory, and to make their native poverty and pitiful wretchedness the occasions of the display of His own glorious all-sufficiency, while carrying out the good pleasure of His Father's will? Does He not love us too for what we have cost Him? For all the patience wherewith He waited for us till He saw us in the stream of time floating downward, and then called us by His grace? For all the care and toil which He has bestowed upon us, each one, up to this moment?

But there are three things more I would say. First, it was in eternal redemption and salvation that He was to bring out the new name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Precious to Him the moral glories involved and unfolded in that name. How but love the material in and through which it would be revealed? Secondly, His own glories, and offices, and sufferings, and works, were to proclaim Him whom He loved. How then but love us? Thirdly, while I have spoken of us as children of God individually, the Church—and that was in the thesis—the mystery, is the *chef d'œuvre* (masterpiece) of all God's works; the

espoused now, about to be shortly the bride, and then made the Lamb's wife in the presence of God; to reign with Him through the millennium, and then the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. How should He but prize and love that which will soon come out a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, and be presented by Him as such to Himself? (Eph. v. 25–27.) But yet, the corn of wheat, God's corn of wheat, falling into the ground and dying that it might not abide alone, and what passed then and there on the cross, is the deeper and fuller expression of His love to us. He gave Himself for the Church.

"GOD forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." (Gal. vi. 14, 15.) It is a strange position for one who had been a persecutor, injurious, and a reviler, to find himself in—glorying in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ADAM received the honours of his position in Eden, when invested by the God of power with his headship over the earth.

He of whom we speak, our Lord Jesus Christ, brought out into light what was the moral glory of God, and His own glory, when He died upon the cross, and became obedient then unto death—the death of the cross.

I would muse and rest a little upon this. As to God, His irresistible power knows no check whatsoever. But as sure as this His power is irresistible, so sure likewise is it that He has a character of His own, which in no case

will He violate. Morally, He could not violate His own character. He knows, as God, how the well-being of dependent creatures throughout the universe hangs upon, in their various measures of capacity, their knowledge of Him, and so being cheerfully subject to Him.

THERE are the Being in all its distinctive peculiarities, the attributes, and lastly the traits of character of the Supreme, which never were revealed or fully uncovered till the cross of Jesus our Lord. And then they came out fully, and presented, as I judge, the balance of the power and wisdom, and other attributes, together with the love, and light, and mercy, and compassion, and holiness of the Godhead, the clue to all the divine ways and thoughts when the new name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost shined forth, though not understood by any save God Himself. And this we contrast with the world—the selfish flesh of man and Satan. The cross was the stupendous work which formed the root of eternal redemption and salvation; the basis, too, of putting right all that had been wrong in or about any creature that had chosen to try to be independent of God.

But to turn to the cross itself. The Son of God was there as God's Anointed Man; in the region of death, scene of the temporary triumph of Satan over the first Adam, the earth was sin full: Satan, its prince, was there; he that was the executioner* of the sentence of death for sin—sin into which, with subtlety and malice against God, he had beguiled Eve and led Adam; he was there, with murderous intent against men, and with power too, for he had the power of death.

* This statement is left unaltered, though some may question it.—ED.

The hour, solemn hour! was come, in which the Christ of God was there too. For the hour was come, when He was to stand between God and Satan; and to stand there upon the question of judgment, and righteousness, and holiness, as to sin against God. Blessed be God who had such an One to put forward. One that was Jehovah's fellow, God manifest in flesh, over whom the devil had no power, nor the evil world; for He was holy, harmless, undefiled, apart from sin. The truth was Himself, and light as well as love was in Him.

And the light did shine out, and with it the truth stood confessed, as to every one and everything, and love was vindicated too. There was a cup full of wrath in its contents, God's unchangeable mind against sin in the creature. In Eden total darkness as to God and man had been the first and immediate effect of hearkening to the serpent, and defiantly setting God's word aside. Moral death had set in. Death of the body would follow; and what would be in the end? With the serpent cast down into the place prepared for him, they that followed him would be there also. Repressed and excluded from the presence of Him, whom having rejected, they then hated, ever learning the internal bitterness of sin, and never coming as creatures to the end of the lesson of what rebellion against the Infinite Creator means. What in the very constitution of things is never-ending, everlasting, could not be expressed in time in a finite creature: the thing is infinite; for God is infinite. "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," is a wise and true word; yet no human language could carry even that which the Christian mind can see in the positive side of it.

That cup the Lord claimed for Himself. It was the cup which the Father had given Him; should He not

drink it? Shrink as a perfect man from being forsaken? "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" He must and did in Gethsemane, and John xii. 27, &c., shows He did. But taking it at His Father's hands, drink it He would; obedient unto death, the death of the cross, as the One that said, "Lo! I come, to do thy will, O God." And He took it, and drank it, and died that thereby He might thereafter stand confessed as the One that was the last Adam, life-giving Spirit.

But 'twas the hour of darkness then. No creature mind could answer the questions then, Where was God who had again and again publicly owned Him as "my beloved Son?" Why is He, the Christ, thus left? Where is the Spirit of God? Has the world, and the prince of the world, power over Him? Is man's wicked flesh thus to triumph? The darkness was felt darkness; the sun withdrew its light. To the understanding of a John, a Mary, &c., what did it mean? They knew, through faith, God; and they knew the Christ. Their trust and hope were outside of themselves; their rest was in God alone. All around totally inexplicable to reason and to sense.

Himself, He knew all about it, though nevertheless He entered into and felt it all perfectly. His God's name and honour had been outraged by man, in and from Eden downwards. It was no light burden to bear the penalty thereof, and He had to allow man then and there to express his thoughts about His God upon and against Himself. He had the consciousness of the contrast between flesh in men, and His own flesh (as spotless, the only One that could be a sin-offering). He felt He had, too, the patient waiting for the devil to outwit himself, and go beyond the limits of any power which was of God; and I know not what else was in the mixture which He, as the

One dependent upon and obedient to God, had to drink. In the midst of it all, He it was, and He alone, who gave to God His place, and fully owned God in it all. The light of "there is God" shined out in perfect light amid the darkness, though the time was not come for God's being love in it all to be declared. He knew the love, and His love attributed in His own mind all about redemption, and salvation to God. He was the servant of God in it, suffered then as He had done before all what was apportioned to Him. And how does the power and value of His obedience unto death, the death of the cross, make Him to be the touchstone of "what is truth" then and there, when with enlightened eyes and hearts we, since Pentecost, look back upon it! Below the superficial surface of the current of the world, there was an under current of the counsel (Acts ii. 23) of God. Below the surface of One crucified through weakness, there was the Lamb of God bearing sins. And above it all, there was glory to God in the highest, peace toward man.

Nothing, I believe, is known by us aright, until its connection with the cross of Christ in God's mind is known. His cross may well make us count and act towards the whole system of the world, as towards a crucified, put-to-open-shame, thing, by its having crucified Him. Its character was revealed thereby, and the love that He bore and bears to us may well make us act as having ourselves been crucified together with Him on it (Rom. vi.), according to the mind and COUNSEL OF GOD.

The word of God, as it originated creation, so does it regulate His creatures.

In Eden, the blessing given to man was to remain his, unless or until he set aside God's word. From the ruin of the fall there is no escape but by receiving and be-

coming subject to the Word of God, in the declaration about the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head. The word of God (John i.) lies at the bottom of every fragment of the word written in its very core. Well may God, then, give to it the place He does in the affection He bears to the Son of His love. And well too may all blessing to us hinge in very grace upon our receiving that Word. This, it seems to me, is to be noticed, too, as to the Spirit. He puts forward the Word, and now the word about the Christ before Him; thus recognising, as does the Father, the Word, that word of God presented in person, and each detail of it given expression to by the Son; to speak of whom is the province of the Spirit.

The powerlessness of the Word apart from the Spirit, save to test man, is admitted.

Have you received the word as the word of God, and about the Christ? (Make sure you fail not in this.) In what part of it? The Spirit is behind and with it? Be assured of that, and He will make it to be quickening and vivifying.

In a certain sense, the reception and presence of the Spirit with a believer is a matter of faith, proved by the word he holds, and by the holding of that word. And yet the established believer who knows the doctrine of Rom. viii., knows that it is the Word that found him, rather than he that found it; the Word that has laid hold of and holds him, rather than he that holds it.

The difficulty in some minds, as it has often appeared in reading meetings, and at *les conférences*, so called, (though they be but reading meetings upon a larger scale than usual, and giving little more place to the teacher), is as to the order in which the Spirit, and the Word through which He works, stand forward in the Scriptures.

It seems to me that God's order in counsel and plan and work for Himself, and His order for man in learning and knowing and doing, &c., are often in contrast, and necessarily so.

CHOOSING in Christ—who did that? God. And when? But what can I know about God's choice, or "the when," or "the to what," until I have heard the gospel and received it, and am established in it?

God knows and acts, too, as to the end from the beginning. In learning Christ we learn in spirit much more than we think. "Why persecutest thou Me, Saul?" contains in germ the whole mystery. Howbeit Saul then knew not what it was all about; nor what wonders "the spouse," "the Bride," "the Lamb's wife," would have circling around the one Person in three different positions. Scripture is to be searched into, and all the ways and habits divine of God in writing it noted; His use of various words; His order and consecutions, whether as to the unbeliever or the believer.

Wondrous and adorable is God in the way in which He serves all now in some way or another. Wondrous too ere the Lord sent the message (John xx. 17) to His brethren, how He had let both Mary and them show out whereabouts they were, and searched and proved their hearts in so doing. Thus, as in chap. xxi. throughout, all the fulness of the free grace in Him stood forth conspicuously. How beautifully free and full and gracious were those outshinings of His worthiness and love!

ANY one tracing out even from a concordance the occurrences of the word "spirit" may find enlargement of mind upon the subject. But a concordance has been

called, a "dunce's book," and reference to it turned aside from for the more excellent way of finding your passages in the page of Scripture; and there too you find their contexts. This is a far better way; and though we may at times be kept waiting till we find what we seek, that only tends to impress upon us our ignorance of the book, and the contents of the passage too, and then the value of searching; for they that seek shall find. To consult a living person about it might help on communion of saints one with the other.

ABOVE me, God; down below me, God; before me, God; behind me, God; all round about me, God. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. Who, as David said, can get himself away, can escape where God is not?

But the believing Christian only can say (1 John iv. 12, 13), "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit."

THE Christ as the object of his perception of things above, as sitting on the throne of God, and of His Father and our Father, and the Spirit of God indwelling and ruling in his heart, Paul seems to have laboured with the heavenly Church in view, and in his mind, by day and by night. The church external down here grew up, through Satan's guile and man's corruption, while these labours went on; but his own divinely-inspired truth about the Church, God's Church, the bride and wife of the Lamb, ruled in Paul. Satan and man and flesh might, and would, do their worst; and he (Paul) knew what man would be allowed to do spite of all his service; but all would work

together, and be overruled to the praise and glory of God, and to the blessing of those who should be kept through it all until the coming of the Lord, kept through the power of the truth as taught them by God.

THEY lose much who read the Bible by chapters only. For not only is the continuous sense thus often marred and lost, but also the contrasts in the sequences of consecutive chapters are missed by us in our weakness. To give a concise example of what I mean:

John xvi. gives us Christ among disciples, teaching them in private about the new state of things then about to be introduced; viz., the Holy Spirit given, as on Pentecost, and the world in direct conflict with those in whom He would be.

Chap. xvii. What a contrast! Himself in free and full communion, talking with the Father about these very people, in their then present and future state, as looked at by the Father and Himself, and this in their hearing, as they were around Him.

Chap. xviii. Again what a contrast! He goes forth with His disciples to Cedron, to meet Judas, and make His own progress onward thence, through the Aaronic High Priest's palace (Himself in lowly guise, yet hereafter to be the true Melchisedec), to the Roman emperor's hall of judgment, and thence onward to Golgotha.

Chaps. xvi. xvii. xviii. How perfect, He, and His wisdom, and self-possession, each in these three scenes!

As Servant, and as Son, and as Sufferer at man's hand and at God's, how perfect! and how attractive to the believer!

I AM poor, but not needy; for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed me. He has given me a portion with the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, as it is written, "Has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." (Eph. i. 3.) Well may such speak well of Him who has spoken so well of them. His will has so expressed itself in His word—most blessed and precious word which endureth for ever, and can never fail; for "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Numb. xxiii. 19.)

"Who has blessed us;" the blessing has been conferred; is therefore ours already. Observe the largeness of it—"with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." It has not been given to us to keep, but to a better and more competent keeper, to One who could say, "I and my Father are one." (John x. 28–30.) Where is it? "In Christ." Just as "our life is hid with Christ in God," so is the portion here spoken of. We have to know it, and, like Paul, through faith, and by the Spirit, to overflow with thanksgiving, our hearts and minds being occupied through grace with it. Observe, there is not only largeness with "every," but a description which, while giving definiteness, acts in a certain sense as limitation. "Every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies." "Spiritual" here, for a heavenly people, stands in contrast with material, for an earthly people (Israel). Blessings through the Holy Spirit shall come on, overtake, Israel, when she hearkens to the voice of the Lord its God; blessing in the city, the field; the fruit of the body, the ground, cattle, kine, sheep; the basket and store; in coming in, and going out (Deut. xxviii. 6). And while some may say, this is conditional on *her* obedi-

ence, faith replies, "Yes;" and she will be chastened therefore, but the promise stands in Hosea ii. 14–23, and secured upon the ground of what God will Himself be to her after that.

These blessings will flow from God to a redeemed people upon earth, and through the Spirit; but the Holy Spirit will not dwell in these blessings, as we shall find Him actually in spiritual blessing of the heavenly places when we come to them in detail; earthly and heavenly give the character. For here, and note it, though the heavens and the earth are conjoined, and form one whole, they are distinct. See the proof of this in that we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. And again, during the millennial reign the kingdom is on the earth; but the court of it, the Lamb and His wife, in heavenly places. And again (Eph. i. 10), all things in Christ will be gathered together in one, whether things in heaven, or things on earth. In Him (Col. i. 20) all this was settled before the world's foundation. (Eph. i. 4.)

And in one aspect of the subject it seems as if there was something like another limitation. At all events, note it, that in verse 3 (the mystery is the subject which the Spirit is introducing here), the portion or dowry of the heavenly people is looked at; but beside the dowry, character, and place of the assembly, there is the relationship between us and the Lord individually; that is, the assembly of God has a sphere marked for it, as has the kingdom. Material blessings are not ours now if we are sheep for the slaughter, killed all day long, delivered unto death, or dying daily. Material blessings fitted for man upon earth are not now ours, will not be ours hereafter; but our own portion, every spiritual blessing in heavenly

places. But yet as espoused, as bride-expectant, or as wife of the Lamb, we get a connection with Himself personally, so that all things are ours (1 Cor. iii. 21-23) in another sense. [The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory Eph. i. and ii. give us as to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and (chap. i. 17) the facts presented to faith revealed therein. But chap. iii. 14 (parenthesis) gives us the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our communion through the new name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, an inexhaustible experience for us.]

All the promises of God in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now He that establisheth us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God, who has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. (2 Cor. i. 22.)

Oh that we were filled with these things as the sincere milk of the word! that we were minding these things! One who lives on milk will oft have a white line on the upper lip, where a little has dried. I would that the counterpart of that were true of me; not a mind occupied with circumstances of this world, or even of this earth, but of things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. The professing Church has Babylon, and its portion in time and on the earth, but cannot keep it, and has nothing beyond it in heaven. If minding earthly things, it is clear, though they may abide beyond my part of the night down here; yet I cannot keep myself amidst them, nor can they satisfy man's heart any more than husks that the swine do eat can satisfy man's stomach. But if minding heavenly things, the Christ, satisfaction and delight of God and of the Father while time runs its course, and for eternity, abides the same.

and He through the Spirit is enough for me as Son and Heir of God. God is a great giver. He has given us His Son, and will with (as here, in) Him give us a place in the sphere where He is, and is to be most displayed of all.

What an interest in me, in us, did the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ show! And how plainly is that interest written about here—our treasure as seen by God locked up safely for us in the Lord Jesus Christ! And what is the measure of the Christ's love to me, to us, whom His God and Father has thus blessed, and handed over to Him that we might be in Christ?

In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you—though another thing shows our safety whose is the blessing.

"Love freely begets love" was a heathen saying; "looking is the food of love" an English poet's. We have in our book, "We love Him, because He first loved us;" and, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was first in loving. God is love. He blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Paul knew and taught this in our verse. We receiving it, can bless Him who has so blessed us first.

There is something here withal to challenge each one. Art thou the one professor who is here spoken of? Believer, this is your position, your burden, your service due, as following Paul, as Paul followed Christ! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c. May I, and thou, be doers of this word, and not hearers only!

All spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. What, in detail, are they? If I singled out from this context, Eph. i. 3–14, the answer I should say: from verse 4, the being holy and blameless before Him in love; verse 5,

being in a place of sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself; verse 6, made accepted in the Beloved (or graced in Him); verse 7, redemption through His blood, and the forgiveness of sins; verse 8, His abounding to us in all wisdom and intelligence; verse 9, the knowledge of the mystery of His will; verse 10, as to the gathering, hereafter, together in one, all things which are in Christ, whether in heaven or in earth, in Him; verse 11, in whom a peculiar inheritance has been allotted to us; verse 13, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise; verse 14, who is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. These are but part of the blessed inventory, but they form a part of it. Other scriptures may give out their contents, and each, I doubt not, in harmony and keeping with the more immediate subject of the contents where they are found as these are.

Observe it, the prediction of blessings upon earth, or earthly blessings, have the family of Abraham as their line, and the land of promise as their centre while this globe remains; yet all by Jesus Christ, and through the Spirit. These predictions, however, as to earth, extend beyond an earth which can be burnt up (2 Peter iii. 10); for they include a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (*v.* 13, and Rev. xxi. 1–5.)

And observe, too, the difference between the blessings upon earth as freely given to Adam at the first, and to remain his unless, or until, he broke his allegiant subjection to the word of the Lord God. Scripture unfolds the hopes of the earthly blessings from the fall onwards, and there is no difficulty in following out from creation onward the opening stream. But of none of these is it written that *they* were from before the world's foundation, though of course God knew the end from the beginning.

Those blessings are all written about in the word, in the Old Testament; but not so as to our blessings in the heavenlies.

Of us, whose they are, it is written after Pentecost, and not till then, "According as He chose us in Him before the world's foundation." And as we read (Eph. iii. 4, 5) of the mystery of Christ, "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;" for the mystery from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things. (*v.* 9.) Eternal redemption and salvation were not written about in times previous to Pentecost.

The choice of us, of me, in Christ from before the foundation of the world is the point of departure of the word of God about our blessing.

And even as to Adam in Eden, and Eve too, if he was a type of Him that was to come, He that was to come was, and His portion before God too, ere He made the first man Adam, a living soul, a type of the last man Adam, a life-giving Spirit. That is clear. He chose us in Christ; what a precious word! what a grand truth! And He thus exercised this good pleasure of His will—motives drawn from within Himself, and plans formed by Himself, when we were not in existence; and not for our sakes, whose first appearance in existence would be as having fallen in Adam, and enveloped in all the fruits consequent upon sin, but rather for His own glory as God, and for the setting forth of the Father's supreme delight in the Son, in us, and through the Spirit. And yet the littleness of the creature is never so seen as when it will be displayed in the glory in Christ, and with God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Why do believers so shrink from giving God credit for being better than man, or themselves individually? His supremacy is awful to a sinner; but to the believer, surely, as sustaining His character and work shown to-usward, 1 Peter i. 17–21 makes it most blessed to us.

Oh, if He were not sovereignly supreme to maintain Himself while showing out His character and work, what could a poor ruined creature do? But when I look at His Being, self-existent; and at His power, and character, and works, even I can say, No refuge for the ruined creature like that which is in the unruined Creator.

I turn now to the first of these wondrous blessings (Eph. i. 4), that we might be, or for us to be, holy and without blame before Him in love.

Holy is said both of God and of the Father. The primary idea of holiness I judge to be, not purification, but separation in principle and fact to God and the Father. Put apart for God and the Father first, and then that position ruling every thing. (John xvii. 19.) "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth," is the verse which settles this. He could not have purified Himself, the One who knew no sin, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, apart from sin. But He did separate Himself, and went and sat down on the throne of the majesty in the highest, the accepted Sin-offering, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. And the new display made in Acts ii. 33–36, abides still, and the knowing of it was the separation of believers down here, and is so now to Him who is their anchor and forerunner fixed within the veil.

PART SECOND.

EARLIER MINISTRY.

LECTURES ON THE ASHERITE AND SOME OTHER PSALMS.

Date about 1854.

Part Second.

EARLIER MINISTRY.

ASHERITE PSALMS.* No. 1.

PSALM i.

THE name of the Book of Psalms is Tehillim in Hebrew, which means praise. The great secret of wisdom is to know how to put things as God puts them. If we read the Psalms aright we should find them all *praise*, hallel. That which viewed in one aspect might be as a firebrand to the conscience, in another would be blessed light shining in the darkness of the soul. Many of the Psalms begin with this word "*blessed.*" It may be said of many of them as of the Beatitudes in Matt. v., that if used as tests to probe the soul there would be anguish; but if we see that they express what Christ is there will be all *praise.* Thus, "Blessed are the merciful." If I see Jesus in this, I see just what I need as a poor ruined prodigal.

It is well to remark that these Psalms beginning "blessed" the Jews call Asherite Psalms. Asher was the name of one of Jacob's sons. The mother, delighted with

* These and the following lectures have been printed from authentic, and in many cases verbatim notes, taken at the time, and since carefully rewritten, compared with other notes, and revised.—ED.

her child, called him Asher—"Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed." These Psalms are addressed to three distinct characters of persons, and turn upon three different pivots. First, Psalm i. is the blessing of some one who has perfectly done God's will: there is no allowance made for any evil—all Christ. Secondly, Psalm xxxii. is the blessing of the poor sinner who has not a shred of righteousness of his own, but is grafted into Christ. Thirdly, Psalm xli. one whose sins have been pardoned, walking in the ways of Christ, into whom he is grafted. They are either Christ as He was down here; Christ as He is; or Christ as He will be hereafter.

It is easy to see how entirely distinct are the three grounds just named. In the first it is one who can claim a right to His reward; but who can say it? (None of us, doubtless, would take such ground; but still there may be the thought of *getting better*.) But in Psalm i. it is *Christ*, not what He says of Himself, but what God says of Him. Here is the delight of God in that Perfect One, that God-Man who never did anything amiss, so that He has given all things into His hands, and set Him upon the throne.

Though we may not be in the danger of taking the ground of this first blessing, I do think there is danger of the saints confounding the second and third species of blessedness; *i.e.* the blessedness of the poor prodigal utterly lost, and freely saved by Christ, with that of Him who has the joy of the Spirit in the sense of obedience. It is needful to have the foot firmly grounded on the Rock, Christ-free grace being the ground on which we are saved. Then there will be the going on to walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Saints begin in free grace, and then they try (and ought to try) to walk; but they are apt to forget that it is still the *Rock* on which the foot is planted. It

is common in the Psalms to see a righteous one and an unrighteous one—this wicked one is always Satan, or antichrist. Again, in other Psalms there is one righteous one contrasted with many wicked. In this first Psalm it is this. Here we have the God-Man tried in *the circumstances of men.* It is not like the praise of Christ, now that He has sat down on high as He is presented to us in Ephesians. It is true that God does now give Christ the praise that is due to Him as the perfect Man; but He has higher glory than this now. He was not only put into the furnace and tried here in the place of the wicked, He was truly put into the furnace, and no evil could be found in Him. He saw the path of the wicked, and the seat of the scornful, and still He remained the perfect pilgrim and stranger, "separate from sinners;" but God had thoughts higher than these, when He pointed out to His Son from His eternal throne, that if He would take the cup of wrath, receiving thus the penalty of sin, He would highly exalt Him, and give Him a name above every name. Here was all the largeness of the Divine counsels as to *Christ* as Man. Jesus is seen in a narrow field, bounded off as it were; God points to what His Son was here. I do not think that the sinner finds *true* rest of heart, unless he sees what sort of person Christ was down here. God did not at first present His Son in all His exaltation, but showed Him as He walked on earth, saying, as it were, "Read my character by what you find in Him. Just as He is upon earth you may suppose me to be as God." I suppose the very spring of our first comfortable thought about God is the being brought to see *God's thoughts about Christ.* When wearied with all that is in self, has it not been brought vividly before the mind that God delights in Christ, having found in Him all that He can admire?

There are two things connected with this; first, God has found one in whom He can fully rest. Secondly, He is so occupied with Christ that I can draw near as accepted in the Beloved. I am sure that our near approach to God is inseparable from God's delight in Christ. God is occupied with this perfect One, and I know it. This measuring of what Christ is to God is very different from being occupied about that of which *I* am the centre; and it is the only ground of stable peace.

Verse 1. There is no provision made in this first Psalm for the slightest failure. It must present Christ. Of course it gives *our* moral characteristics if we are saints; but none could take such ground for a moment but Christ. Could Paul, could Peter, have taken up this language? No! It is the character of the way in which we try to walk; but no saint can say, Here is that which abstractedly marks me. What was that which characterized Paul? That he had been a blasphemer, but had *obtained mercy.* How careful he ever was to take this ground; but God came in in spite of it all. This first verse tells our hearts that we are blessed, not on the ground of what we are, but altogether on the ground of what *He is.* We have the threefold character of man's evil here; first, without *God* as the poor Gentiles; secondly, in sinnership, every man wandering in his own way as the Jews and apostate Christendom; and thirdly, the heading of evil in one man, antichrist—the seat of the scornful.

Verse 2. This enters more deeply into what the blessed Lord Jesus was. I believe there is a deep mine of comfort suited to meet our need down here, in thus looking at the Lord Jesus as *man.* Christ looks up to God and says, "I love thee, and I love what is dear to thee." Look at the

Lord Jesus as loving His neighbours—the poor Jews, or more generally *man*—the Gentiles, &c., or the Church as Elder Brother, Firstborn from the dead. Thus it is that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We have His sympathy as one who has been a man down here. Let me ask you, Do you know what it is to be in Christ's presence, and to find His heart burdened? The Jews, the Gentiles, the brethren, are all dear to Christ's heart. I am as sure of this as that He is in the heavens; and I cannot say otherwise to God, than that the One at Thy right hand loves thee, and the things that thou lovest.

This is not merely a fact, but it is that which we should do well to lay to heart. Has not Christ's heart been occupied about you during the past night, and up to when? Ah! He begins where He was found, with His Father. Dark man turns to darkness, and thinks of Christ as beginning with our darkness; but it is not so with Christ. He begins with God's thoughts above, we always begin from the *evil*, but Christ always begins from the *good*. His brethren are God's. He loves His own, because God loves them. How should He but love them? The very place which Christ holds is inseparably connected with God's love to some one else. If He is the Firstborn, it is among many brethren. Could any of us have held such a place? Our stress would have been upon the *firstborn*, "I am the Firstborn." Not so with Christ. If He is the Firstborn, it is to bring His brethren to God. What would all the pre-eminence be to Christ if it separated from God? Eve, in order to gain the pre-eminence, risked the loss of God; but Christ being from the Father, was ever associated with the Father. When seen pre-eminent in glory, it will be in full communion with God. The delight of Christ is to bring all the fulness of God's character to bear upon every

little crevice in our hearts. What is that which is most precious to Christ? That through Him God could make Himself known to the many sons—all the fulness of His heart, the riches of His grace. How comforting, too, is this love of Christ's heart with reference to the poor Jews, who are becoming more and more the subjects of interest in all that is taking place on earth.

What was the origin of the present war? The Holy Land. Satan has a spite against the spot where Christ's glory as King is to be displayed, and so he has used it as a firebrand to the whole earth. But in Christ's heart there is a warm spot of love for His nation. The philosophers of this world, such as Voltaire, could only read in the history of the Jews that which degraded the character of God; but they knew not what was in Christ's heart as to His people. So also as to the Gentiles; if I look at them, and consider their sorrow, is there nothing in it which moves Christ's heart? Loving God, He loves all these—Gentiles, Jews, the Church, and more than Himself. For them He gave up all, and every thought connected with them in the heart of God is linked with Christ. Every trait in the divine character, everything which was morally glorious in God, shone out in Christ, as seen in this Psalm; light in the midst of darkness. The Son of Man gave the complete vindication of the character of God, and thus He fully merited this title of "*Blessed.*"

Verse 3. He could not be *alone* in this glory. "He bringeth forth His fruit in His season." "I am the true vine, ye are the branches." Here is the full thought even with regard to God's earthly purposes. There is nothing before God but one single Being as the root and channel of all blessing. Observe, that the provision here made for us (and it is always so when *mercy* comes in) is on the ground

of that which is in us not being what God can like. The peculiarity of the blessing connected with this root is that there is *culture* and *success*. Unlike Luke xiv. we were looking at lately, where all the culture ended only in failure and disappointment.

"Success!" All things work together for good. Is this truth fresh in your hearts with respect to God's dealing with you now? Each of us has some peculiar trial, some thorn in the flesh, some pebble in the shoe; the gashes made by it may be rankling and festering, but you cannot, any of you, say it will end in disappointment. All things *work together* for good. In the light of the glory you cannot call this otherwise than *good*. The present distress may work out much evil, much of the world which was in our hearts; but so standing before Christ it will surely be found among the *all* things.

I may not deal with it, as in Luke xiv., attempting to set things to rights around me, but rather as the poor prodigal in chap. xv.; and then in the taste of grace we shall find every little hollow, every pool in the valley, filled with water, because we shall see how God has a purpose of blessing in it all.

Verses 4, 5. Though there be now a calm, the storm is at hand. What will it be when God arises, and, as Righteous and Holy, sweeps all before Him? We cannot dwell upon the misery and anguish of those who are outside Christ. When the hurricane arises, when God rises up and says, "Now I am come to reckon with you"—blessed for those who are sheltered in Christ.

Verse 6. Our blessing is, that we have in Christ one who has communicable blessing for others, even for us. This Book of Praises has the best beginning. It begins with Christ, who is emphatically the Blessed One. As we

near heaven, drawing towards the edge of the wilderness, the comparative value of Christ to God increases in our thoughts. When I first set out on the journey, the two thoughts uppermost in my mind were, that I as a poor sinner, who was so far off, had found salvation; and that I could go through the wilderness singing of mercy, for I had God to carry me through. Little indeed did I think what sort of a pilgrim I should make. But now in approaching Jordan I find it is more the thought of what *Christ* is—what He will be in the glory, what God's satisfaction and delight in Him is, takes the place in the heart. Were we more occupied with God's thoughts, and God's delight in Christ, we should have more strength for our pilgrimage; and very sure do I feel, that were any of us now present to be conscious that we should be called hence, say in an hour or two, the only thing which would give light to our souls would be the apprehension of what Christ is before God, and His delight in Him. I know not one thing more to be desired for the enlargement and refreshment of our souls than to have the sunshine of God's delight in Christ shining into our souls as we go onward through present darkness.

ASHERITE PSALMS. No. 2.

Psalm xxxii.

THERE is one thing peculiarly sweet in connection with the gospel of God's grace. It is that which suits the prodigal when he is brought home to the Father's house, as well as when he is in the far country wanting bread. Hence I have no sympathy with the remark which is sometimes made, "Christians do not want the gospel." Of course it is one thing to preach the gospel to Christians, and another thing to preach it to poor sinners by the wayside who have never received it; but as for the gospel, by which I understand all the riches of the grace of God, we always need it: for myself, I expect to enjoy the gospel nowhere so much as *in heaven.*

This thirty-second psalm is one of the Asherite—*i.e.* blessing—Psalms. Psalm i. describes the perfect Man, the object of God's affection and delight. Psalm xxxii. is the blessedness of the one whom the Shepherd has found and brought home. There is a verse at the close of Psalm ii. which connects itself with this in some way; the same idea is repeated in Psalm xxxiii. 21, and xxxiv. 8. It is connected with the word trusteth.

The subject I desire to look at in this Psalm is the blessedness of the saint who knows, like David, after the terrible guiltiness which occasioned such conflict within, the shelter of the cleft in the Rock, opened to him so that no discovery in himself can frighten him out of it. It is

not only that I am picked up as a poor sinner, a brand plucked out of the burning, but there is something in God's character developed in this. I am picked up and put in the cleft of the Rock. Then, being set there, the peculiarity of the blessing involves something more—mercy I have found. Where has that set me? Not only has a mortal disease been found in me, and a remedy provided, but when I come to look at the remedy, I find in it altogether something peculiar. In God's dealings with the poor sinner, then, there is something far beyond anything in creation. Nothing *there* was needed to bring forth the down-stooping of God; neither would it have been for His glory as Creator to have tolerated that in the creature which was unworthy of Himself. But the secret thing hidden in the character of God, in His eternal counsels, was *redemption.* In redemption you get what had no expression in creation; that is, the expression of *Himself*, of His own character which He gave in handing forth from His heart the Son of His love; not to a cup of blessing in the garden of Eden, but to a cup of wrath on the cross; not to be glorified on earth, but to take the place of ruined sinners. God's ways are past finding out. To enter more deeply into what He is, to rest there, is what our souls need. In Him we are rich. Here is a bright spot for the soul. How happy for me to be a vessel chosen for the showing out of what are the riches of grace hidden in God. God had His own character complete just as much before the manifestation of this attribute of His mercy to the sinner. Just as the father's heart was the same when the prodigal was in the far country, as when he was brought back. "It is meet that we should make merry and be glad:" just so with God. There was nothing new in Him, but it is the display of divine love, as here in Psalm xxxii., far beyond

the display of divine glory at creation. The angels desire to look into these things. In Rev. v. none taste redemption-blessedness save two parties—God and the poor sinner. The angels cannot sing that song. "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me."

Let us try to look at this; God and a poor sinner standing together. God knows what He is, and what we are. If we only look at ourselves there is no help for us. Satan never suggested that I have sinned, but God must bear the punishment. There is something in God's thoughts that quite sets at defiance man's mind. We could never think how God had riches in Himself, by which He could provide by His own love for our salvation from the depths of misery and condemnation. We should never have thought of the way in which He has communicated this new life by the new nature, and the Holy Ghost dwelling there. I think of the moral character of God, and can He take up a poor sinner and make him fit to sit down with Him? "I know a way," said God—"mercy. My love shall go and pluck the brands out of the burning, and so bring me more glory than the first creation could have done. I will bring to light this attribute of my moral character, and produce it in them." There is nothing in the nature of the sinner but what God hates. The light of God shining into a man shows him what he is.

There are three kinds of evil spoken of here—"transgression," which supposes a command men have swerved from; "iniquity," which is opposed to moral purity; and "sin," which is erring from God. Christ was the contrary of all that is in man. There was none of all this in Him to be covered. Besides these three things, there is in the experience of the man, *inward guile.* There is an inward veil over the heart, and that is the worst kind of moral

evil. This has to come out to the light, and here is the great difficulty with ourselves. If we know ourselves we shall be conscious of this, and there is an inward fire burning. We cannot say we have had no guile; we know we have.

Saul of Tarsus found the fruit of his sin, not in the bottom of his own heart, but up in heaven—"I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." We never know ourselves, but we must be ready to say to our flesh, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." David's joy was in being a vessel to contain the blessedness of all this grace shown in the forgiveness of all transgression, iniquity, sin, guile. Were there a fold, in which was one poor sheep that had wandered and been lost, and the shepherd had gone forth and rescued it at his own great suffering, I suppose that would be a marked sheep, because by that sheep the character of the shepherd would be most displayed (see David, in 1 Sam. xvii.); and to David's heart here there was evidently this: "I am one whom the Shepherd has picked out to show His character. Not simply what a happy person I am, but what glory the Shepherd has got for Himself by showing mercy to such an one as I am." David knew God was seeking to get Himself a name by what He was doing. This is the very richness of the gospel to the poor sinner who believes it. If I think of a firebrand plucked out, a poor sinner who deserved wrath rescued, there is a sort of effort to think of not getting my desert; there will be a sort of exercise of soul before one is perfectly at rest. There will be a less degree of this, if the work of the Shepherd who sought the sheep is the prominent thought; but if I think of the One for whom I was sought, then there will be deep joy in the soul of knowing what a welcome I shall have there.

The turn between the fifth and sixth verses is very beautiful. In verse 5, mercy has been found for the individual. In verse 6, we see what God has done by bestowing mercy on one, to get Himself glory, so that others may be encouraged to come to Him. If a John Bunyan, a Saul of Tarsus, a Peter may come, I may. "Well," the poor sinner will say, "God picks up the worst, the very refuse, to show that it is nothing in the poor sinner that entitles him to notice; but *mercy* draws, and none can hinder." "Nothing but God's mercy brought me here," would David say. In verses 3 and 4, David had spoken of his guile before God. There is nothing which even the natural man detests more than guile (a guileful man, if known to be so, is ruined); but the answer to all in David's soul is, "I have found *mercy*."

Then, in verse 7, he goes on to appropriate what was in God. This is just what we have learnt in spirit with respect to Christ. Man strained up to reach that forbidden tree, but Christ stoops down to take the cup of wrath, that He may save the lost; and He brings us up to His place of blessing. He not only has opened to us the things which are given, but He gives us to know *God for us*. All that is His, ours. Not merely outside things, but the Father's house is not complete without the *children*. This house of the Father's is ours. It is the *Father's* house, not merely *God's* house. The glory, the Father's love, all is ours. "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them;" and then, to show there was no restriction in the *love*, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." So David here takes up everything in the same way. "Thou art my hiding-place." But we see what David could not see; viz., that the Spirit is given

to us—not only the spirit of revelation, but the Spirit within forming the affections suited to the relationship, "Abba, Father." The mercy is according to God. All our sentient needs are met by it, and the man is without guile.

These three blessings are given, and then God begins to deal with the man from the other extremity of His own blessedness, so that he can say, "All that thou art is mine. That glory that is in thee—mercy will be as a wall of fire round about to compass me in." David's heart was bubbling up with the living waters, and then (*v.* 8) God lets out His heart to him, to show him how He would come down to him down here. It is not only *I*, but thou—"I will be with thee where thou art in thy trouble and sorrow"—which is the thought conveyed. It is a much deeper thing to be able to say, "I am my Beloved's," than "my Beloved is mine." All that *God* is gives me rest; and deep is the blessedness, knowing that I have Him as my portion; but to know that I am indeed HIS, that He is with me in all circumstances, so near to me, is a deeper experience still.

The minds of the saints one seldom finds rising above Romans viii.: "Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died," &c. Blessed experience indeed! But it is more to feel and know how God is entering into all my circumstances. I do not here mean as the God of providence merely, as Christians speak of Him. I do not doubt but He is the God of providence to the world quite as much now as He was in the days of Jonah and Nineveh; but some will try to strain the grace of Christ through providence, and this is wrong, and is sure to bring in disappointment.

A dear saint of God I knew, now at rest with Him,

did this. He took up the providential blessings of Psalm xci., and when the plague was raging around him in the East, he felt sure it would not come nigh his house. The pestilence seemed to depart for a time without having touched him. It speedily returned, however, and cut off his wife. What desolation of heart followed! But it is another thing for the heavenly man, a saint brought into heavenly blessing, to be finding God associating Himself with him in every step of the wilderness. This brings in resurrection, while the other does not. It is not deliverance out of the troublous circumstances that we must look for, but it is to learn our God as the God of resurrection in the midst of death. In all the rolling down and rolling up again we get something connected with Christ. (See 2 Cor. iv. and Rev. i.) Neither Paul nor John were taken out of the trial. Not as God appeared to Abraham—El-Shaddai, but "you will have trial down here; but I will be with you in it." The Lord speaks to John of what *He* is—the One who is "alive for evermore;" therefore it was, "Fear not." The Lord did not deliver him from his sorrow in Patmos. So with us. We must expect to find circumstances of death encompassing us here; but to know God as the God of resurrection in Christ brings in fuller peace, and deeper blessing, because it brings Himself so close to us as our Father, numbering the very hairs of our head.

Christians generally are not nearly so much occupied with Christ as with themselves, neither do their circumstances bring them to Christ. If one may answer for another, I am sure all will have to confess how little we have known of what it is to have our Father with us down here. Not only does the light of Christ's glory stream upon us through the veil, the rent veil; not only

is the bright eye of Jesus our risen Lord upon us, but *our God is here.* Let us confess our shortcomings in the apprehension of it; and however impassable every sorrow may be to my mind, still the Father and Christ are close to me to teach me resurrection power in and through the circumstances, and make me know that "the excellency of the power is of God, and not of us."

This psalm is a psalm for the wilderness. Mercy meets in it the firebrand fit for destruction, the wandering sheep brought back by the Shepherd; and then God cheers the heart as it goes on with the knowledge of what He is to it, thus pouring in the oil of gladness.

ASHERITE PSALMS. No. 3.

PSALM xl. xli.

IN reading the Psalms one finds them arranged in couplets. Very few of them stand as solitary witnesses of the remarks made in them, but in twos and threes. Whoever arranged the Psalms, we know they were so ordered in divine wisdom, not according to *time*, but in reference to their *subjects*. A psalm of Moses following one of David, and those written later are placed earlier, and the early, late. They are arranged into books 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. A person who had been reading them attentively found they were divided into five books, and was surprised to see that in Hebrew they have them distinctly arranged in five. The headings of the Psalms have as much divine authority as the book itself. The Jews would never touch them any more than the other part.

These two psalms, xl. and xli., go together. In connection with what has been said before, there is another general remark I would make, too often overlooked. The doctrinal truth connected with union, so new to some minds, is found from Scriptures to have been in God's mind from the beginning. It is new to us in the sense of the unity of the body. The vital union which exists between the Head and the members we do not find in the Psalms.

But there are other principles of union which are not vital, such as that which exists in a family, a country, &c.

In Adam we see the unity of a system connected with this earth. There is no other world but this that we know of where man in Eden was the centre of a system. It pointed to Christ we doubt not, brought out more fully in Psalm viii., Eph. i., and 1 Cor. xii. The Adamic centre of unity is the largest and most general thought of union. Then, as relating to Israel, there was a King as a centre. Christ is Priest and King. See Psalm xviii., which is the summing up of the whole history of the kingdom.

The heading up of things under one is a leading thought in Scripture; and as to the acting parties connected with man, the head casting its light or darkness over its entire system. The psalm answering to the psalm showing the blessed, perfect Man upon earth, is the second. Psalm i. shows the only One who has a claim as the root of blessing; and all who reject Him, as in Psalm ii., must be swept away in destruction.

Again, the answering psalm to the thirty-second is the thirty-first. In the thirty-second we have the poor sinner made righteous; and the ground of that being accomplished, we find in the thirty-first, Christ on the cross bearing the sinner's sin. We can never happily get through the Psalms without seeing these couplets; for I must see the judgment which fell upon Christ was *my* judgment, that it was definitely for *me* that Christ died on the tree. This is more than "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." God said in this to the world, "Here is a door open, and I desire my Son to be known as the Saviour of sinners—'come.'" Christ is the open door through which mercy shines down on the world; but that is different from my knowing Christ as the One who bore my sins, the One on whose pierced hands and feet and side I can look and say my individual sins were

there. This is how I have peace. Christ was entirely identified with His people, and all that He did was for them. He said of His people's sins, "*Mine* iniquities have taken hold upon me; I cannot look up." His Spirit was given to us, but in the essential element of Christ's standing He was *alone!* There was no dross there. Satan heated the furnace for Him as hot as possible, and God poured out His wrath upon Him; but all heaped together could not bring out one element of dross. Nothing came out but His own infinite perfectness as a Man under the hand of God. If He had not been so tested it might have been said He died for His own sins; but no, not one failure could be charged upon Him.

We find an identification of Christ with the remnant of Israel—one Spirit in Him and in them—Christ, the Introducer of the Spirit. The source is in Him, and communicated to His people, but *one* Spirit. The same things are said of Him and of Israel; *e.g.* "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." With the thought of this corporate union, there is great need of care in reading the Psalms, whether as Adamic unity or as "one spirit with the Lord."

Psalm xl. shows the blessedness of the man who could *trust in God.* Christ is the Truster in God. The first wonder in the psalm is that Christ should be in this place (Heb. ii.) "made a little lower than the angels." The patience of Christ! The "patience" John speaks of in Revelation was not the experience of John first, but of *Christ.* Now He is waiting in patience. He has sat down expecting until His foes be made His footstool. He served for a reward, but He has not received it yet.

In this psalm we have Christ as the substitute—the "Just for the unjust." In verse 5, He is standing in connection with the people of Israel, and recounts before

God the wonders He has done. It is the history of one who has been down into a very low place and come up into a very high one.

Verse 1. Judgment for sin. "I waited patiently for the Lord." He was true to God, true to His counsels, true to His purposes. In verses 2 and 3, He did not come up as He went down. He went down as the Man of sorrows, and came up as the One anointed above His fellows. It is very sweet to connect these two things, and to see that what He has is shareable with His people. He will sing the song in our midst. God had peculiar work for Him to do, and He pleads His righteousness in service (*vv.* 6–10), and how He had been in this place as one judged by God. The substitution of Christ, and the completeness of the way in which He bore the judgment, cannot be too frequently thought of by us. The cup He drank quietly from God's hand. Verse 12: The Spirit of Christ testifying in the remnant. There is unity of spirit in Christ and in them. It is true *their* testimony goes beyond their experience, which could not be with Christ.

It is very important to divide between three things which are often confounded together—conscience, truth, and the Spirit. If God is acting upon the conscience, there will be a measure of light, though it may be very small. The conscience may not be able to comprehend its own latent hope of mercy. If the conscience deal honestly, it is so far well; it is the work of the Spirit through the measure of truth given. But if we take the measure of truth we have, and make it the standard, we are doing that which is most injurious to the conscience, and dishonouring to the Spirit of God, and it is sure to bring in pride and a fall. God says, "That boil must ripen into a head before I do anything." A man may get proud, *e.g.*, about the truth

he believes of the coming of the Lord—the flesh has come in, and God cannot go on with that; so the world comes in, and then there is a fall. Thus God's truth is injured, and weak Christians, whom we ought to have helped to build up with the truth God has shown us, are stumbled by it. All truth must be held in communion with the Living God. If the heart be warm, even with defective views, there will be blessing. Compare two tracts for instance. One perhaps may be very deficient in the presentation of truth, but having a savour of God. The other a clear statement of truth, but dry and cold as the moonlight on a frosty night. Such truth God does not own. It must flow from Himself, and God is a living Person.

In this remnant we find the Spirit of God acting on their consciences and on their hearts, though they do not see truth exactly in God's way. They have God's Spirit giving testimony by them, and they have the *Living God*. The language of Ps. xli. is the language of such as these. It presents a company speaking of their sins (*v.* 4); and then (*v.* 9) the passage quoted in application to Judas is most remarkable. In principle, the same things apply to the little remnant in Christ's day, and those who will be separated from the mass by-and-by. (Isa. viii.) The unity of the Spirit is the key with which to unlock these psalms. (*v.* 3.) The word rendered sickness here is rendered griefs in Isaiah liii. I am convinced this is the true rendering; sickness is something internal. Grief is produced from without. The Hebrew signification is rubbed or worn down with much painstaking, as a jewel or gold is polished. Affliction and tribulation come from without, and produce this effect upon the soul. The remnant, as in Daniel xi., are not recognized as being in

sickness, but going through tremendous tribulation. They are dragged through terrible billows almost overwhelming, the effect of which is to rub off all that is contrary to God by outside things and in the furnace. He will make them know what they are.

The blessedness of trusting in God applies in principle to the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, down here. It is the inner man which the Lord strengthens, and therefore there must be death and resurrection in connection with it. A man is most strengthened from God when most broken down; therefore there must be this death and resurrection, not only as relating to outward things in service, but as to inward feelings, &c. Never did Christ's moral strength shine out as it did on the cross. The young Christian starts with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory perhaps, in the sense of recent deliverance from the burden of sin and condemnation, but after a time he may lose that. After many years of pilgrimage you may no longer see the bright countenance, the brilliant expression, &c.; but there may be much more of divine power and grace in him now than then. Divine joy is seeing God in everything; that is more deeply felt after the blast of time than in all the freshness of the young Christian. There was more power displayed, and more depth of divine joy in Christ, when He stood calmly still, allowing all the waves and billows to pass over Him, than even in those few occasions when He rejoiced in spirit during His active service.

So many a person thinks he is patient at first starting, but afterwards learns to be much more patient under God's will. The springs are found in another source. It is one thing to feel joy, and another thing to say, as Paul, "All is gone! all have forsaken me!" The Church is gone, but I

have got God. The body, too, may be brought down, and we may have to learn that there is no spring of strength in ourselves, but only in God *Himself*, and we must wait for Him to raise us; and not only the vessel may be cast down, but the inward renewed nature which God has given. We have to learn to suffer God's will as well as to do it. I have here one little word for the aged saints especially, and for brethren seeking to labour for the Lord. There is far more blessing sometimes in suffering God's will than in doing it. There is great price to Him in the patient, quiet endurance of suffering, even though our own self-will may have led to it. This of course was never the case with *Christ;* but we see how He was the patient sufferer when He gave Himself up. "Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." There was all the energy of divine life in that corn; but there must be the suffering of death before the life would be imparted to others. The ripening of divine life and grace in us, and breaking down the old man, is often accomplished by our being put into the crucible where we cannot act, but can only trust in God to act for us.

CONTRAST BETWEEN EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY BLESSING.

EPHESIANS i.; PSALMS ciii. to cvii.

HAVING considered on previous Wednesdays the blessings in Psalms xxxii. and xl., it is now my wish to look at the bearing of the blessedness brought in the Psalms on the heart, and to see the contrast in the character of blessing for the saint in the earthlies, and the saint in the heavenlies.

Two things need to be remembered: First, the position of blessedness belongs to the one man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who becomes the root of blessing to others; secondly, this blessing is meant to bear upon the heart of man, that it may go back to God in praise. God does not give His glory to another; but in giving, He so gives that it is all to go back to Him in the perfect enjoyment of Himself, to His own praise. There is more in this than in the thought the censer conveys, because the censer is not capable of enjoyment. God is steady, immovable in His purposes of mercy. Even in the rain which He gives, causing the verdure to spring up, we see it. Blessing He *will* give, and give it *so* that He lays the blessing on the heart; and so lays it, that the heart enjoys it, and gives it back to God in praise. God's creative power has come into the soul; the man revels in the enjoyment of it, and says, "Here it is; I give it back to thee in praise." Thus it goes up to God.

Now we will look a little at the earthly and heavenly blessings contained in Psalm ciii. to cvii. We get millennial blessedness. Psalm cii. shows Christ as the shifter of the scenes of the dispensations: "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

Then follows the burst of praise from Psalms ciii., civ., cv.,—all praise from earth. When God has done it, there is nothing to do but to light the censer of praise, and waft it back to God who has done it. David could praise, not of David, but of God. I have done nothing, he would say, nothing but failure; but thou hast done it all. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name." When we can speak of nothing else, we can speak of God. In Psalm ciii. David is tracing up to the root of things. Higher and higher the soul mounts in scaling, as it were, this mercy, which, after all, is beyond all measure. Thou hast redeemed my life from destruction, fed me, cared for me, guarded me; but, after all, I cannot measure it: "As far as the east is from the west." Man's widest span would be but a poor rule for that mercy which is from everlasting to everlasting. Verse 13 shows that the tenderness of His love is parental: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Such being His mercy, the practical claim upon the heart is founded on it: "Bless His holy name."

One thing is to be remarked here. It is not merely the ascription of blessing by David to God, but the Spirit of God

in David uses the blessing given in order to return praise. It is one thing to make a harp, and another thing to play on it. There are two senses in which the word blessing is used —a man laying his hand upon an instrument to command blessing, and another thing is the speaking well of His blessing. As poor sinners we may bless God, who, instead of destroying us with the thunderbolt of His wrath, has thought what He could do for us, and has given His Son. David here enters into the blessedness of God, and tastes it for Himself. What a God He is to give such a Son! Is not this the thought running through Psalm ciii., that the poor sinner entirely ruined has found God as the God of *mercy?* that a man who had done every evil, even murder, has so tasted of the springs that are in the God of mercy that he can rejoice in it as the blessing rushes into the soul? In Him is the living water, just what I want, pure in itself, though the channel is full of mud; and this living water washes up plenty of the rubbish, and shows me more and more of the evil I have in myself. And can we not each say, This God of mercy, this mercy in God, suits me? The height, and breadth, and depth of it I cannot scan; the heart of another does not equal it. It is from everlasting to everlasting.

Psalm civ. is another thing. In Psalm ciii. it is the man upon earth. Psalm civ. is a man upon earth still (Christ being the only way of blessing, as at all times); but here it is the soul admiring the goodness of God in connection with providence, taking, like a dove, a wide flight around all creation, as the work of Him in whom it has found mercy and can rest. In Psalms cv. and cvi. there is a difference—cv. being connected with God's dealings in breaking down Israel as individuals and families, and bringing them out from the nations, and at length into

Canaan. The cvi. refers to Israel, as the nation put in a particular place as the centre, and closes with their being broken down and brought into blessing. God has marked off one spot of land to be the centre of the blessing to the earth. First, there was Eden; but when He separated the sons of Adam He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. (Deut. xxxii. 8.) The eye of the Lord could look on this good land, though now He has made the rock to grow up through the fertile soil. An infidel once threw it in the teeth of a Christian, with whom he was conversing, as to the barren condition of the land, that it was impossible it could ever have teemed with inhabitants. His companion asked him whether if the land were burned with fire, and afterwards watered with blood, it could not give fertility to the soil? On his answering in the affirmative, Scriptures were shown to him which prove that God will use these measures.

All these psalms bring out failure on man's part, but all mercy on God's part. He still has a bit of land He calls His own. "I lent it to you," He says to Israel; "but I have cast you out of it for your disobedience." But the land is the object of God's heart now, scene of contest as it is at the present time.

Psalm cvii. Now God is seen from north to south, east to west; and when the people did not know what to do, but were at their wit's end, *He was there.*

Psalm ciii. The highest names by which God was known to Israel are in this psalm—God, Jehovah, and God-Jehovah. It is different in Ephesians. The Son of God is a title used in Scripture in many different senses; as by creation Adam was called the son of God in Eden, and before that there were the sons of God, the angels; but God could not take any other from that scene which

He had created to put upon it such honour. The term son of God applied to Adam (Luke iii. 38) would be in tracing his origin, as a finite being, to God, as the root of his existence.

When Israel is called His first-born, it is always in relation to providence. He dealt in mercy with creation when He sent that span of His providence, the bow in the cloud. All blessings to the nations come in connection with Israel—that was the chosen nation, and is called the son of God, expressive of its connection with God in providence. That could have an end, as we have seen—the nations not recognizing the centre now; but there is one other sense altogether different in which the title is applied; viz., Son of the Father, as spoken of in Ephesians. Israel had no doubt but Messiah was to be the *Son of God;* they had no idea at all of His being the Son of the *Father.* He spoke to them of the Son of man, but they could not at all understand how He (that pitiful Son of man) was going to be "crucified through weakness." The light which shone down upon Israel was all from the throne of God as Creator. They were not able to go up, as it were, above the throne. They knew not the relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, although they did know the glory of the Trinity as God, Son, and Spirit. The Son of the Father was a new name, never revealed until Jesus was about to leave the earth, and claim it in connection with His Church. This brings out the difference between the Jew, the man of the earth, and the heavenly man, the Christian. *Mercy* is a little tasted by the Israelite on earth, and by the man in the heavenlies. Mark the evenness of God's way; His ways do not change. When God shut the door on Paradise He brought in mercy. There have been many dispensations, but never did God

give blessing under any of them save by mercy. No power but by the Spirit of God, no way of mercy but this—"the seed of the woman." In Abel's sacrifice this was brought out, however uninstructed he may have been about it. In faith he took a lamb to represent this seed of the woman. To us (as in the heavenlies) Christ is known, not as our Lord and our God, blessed as that is, but as the Son of the Father; and the Spirit is to us not only as "eyes running to and fro through the earth," but as the *seal*, the earnest of the inheritance. Now in the broad daylight we can look up to the throne of the Father and see His beloved Son there. In Eph. it is all appropriated mercy. I would just ask, How comes it that you cannot speak well of God? A worldly man cannot, the Christian can. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost have done all for him; but the disciple says, "Alas! how sadly I fail in doing it!" The reason of this is, that you have not got to the end of yourself, you have not come to this point, that you know God does not think you worth speaking about. That is what you want, to make you ready to speak well of God. Again, you cannot hasten the work (this in which God is dealing with your souls in breaking you down), and no one can shorten it for you. I see in Paul, John, &c., that they had learnt to have Christ foremost, and self in the background. I must leave myself in God's hand, to be slow or quick as He may please. The process will not advance while I attempt to hurry it. If a man struggles in the water he may sink, but if he throws himself flat on his back he will float on, and come to shore at last.

Eph. i. 3. The apostle here begins *with God*. It is a great thing to say, My sins are forgiven me; but it is more to say that the Father of our Lord Jesus has planned

such a scheme of mercy by which He is glorified by His pardon. In Psalm ciii. I get mercy dropping down from above; in Ephesians I get the source and beginning of it. "Blessed be the God and Father," &c. Let me ask you, Where does your gospel begin? This is in heaven, "spiritual blessings in heavenly places." Psalm ciii. was the highest note of praise a Jew could raise; but David's window was open towards the north, and he saw all the promise of earthly blessings; but our window is over our heads, heavenwards. Stephen looked straight up into heaven. I can say too (*v.* 3), All is mine. It is a different thing to be like David, knowing how mercy suits me when I have failed in everything; or like Paul, who knew he was just the person suited for God. "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering," &c. The reason saints are not more happy and settled in soul is, because they do not see the aspect in which they stand before God, in connection with His mercy; and they look upon God as dealing out His mercy to them on earth, instead of seeing God is in heaven, seeking those in whom He can display His mercy. I have not only found mercy as a ruined sinner, but I have found God, who is rich in mercy, and who says that I as a sinner *suit Him*. God wants sinners. I am a weak one in whom He may show forth His character of mercy; but I am one. I, a sinner, want God, and God wants me to show forth His mercy in. We need to be grounded in God's *mercy*. David learnt it in the place in which he was set. (See 2 Sam. xxiii.) "Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." The mark of what is fit for God is not found in me, but in Christ. He is gone up on high, *accepted*, and so I in Him, not so Israel. The leading thought in

Scripture is mercy; it is in mercy He has plucked brands out of the burning; and when He wanted one to send amongst the Gentiles to take His special revelation, He chose one that had been a blasphemer and injurious, &c.; and when he would send to the hard and stiff-necked Jews He took the one who was even dashing on in his impetuosity, blundering, cursing, and then denying his Lord.

What a school had these two passed through, to fit them to set forth the suitability of poor lost ones to display God's mercy. I do hold that people (saints in the heavenlies) are bound *to sing*. A man in the temple of Jerusalem, set as a singer, what had he to do but to *sing?* He might get out of tune, but he was bound to sing. If you let self and circumstances come in, you will never sing, but if occupied with God and Christ, you will never be out of tune. The more broken in heart and spirit I am, the more deep cause I have to sing of Him (of course we must not express feelings we have not, this would be hypocrisy); but if I sing of what Christ has done I may sing from the bottom of the pit. We may often confound joy of feeling with power of praise, but they are quite distinct. May we have that oil of gladness on the surface of our souls that it may be an easy thing to praise Him!

CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

PSALM xxii.

EVERYTHING in the beginning of this psalm is letting down, and at the end there is everything lifting up. It is full of suffering and joy, but the former chiefly. The Person standing before us here is distinctly the Lord Jesus. There is a difference between this psalm and what we have in Isaiah liii., and in the gospels. In Isaiah we have the blessed Lord as a Lamb set before us, but it is taken up with the special object of showing the different feelings of the persons who had to do with Him; some were cleaving to Him, others turning away from Him. In the gospels we have the historical fact of His sufferings, and in each there is something distinctive connected with the narrative. In Matthew the Lord is connected with Israel as the seed of Abraham; and there is the quotation from this Psalm, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" when He was on the cross. In Mark the Lord Jesus is set forth as the servant, and the same words are quoted. Luke takes Him up as the Son of man, and this is not quoted. There is peculiar repose in John, and there we have the Lord more in His divine character. Finding the quotation from this psalm in Matthew and in Mark, and not in the other gospels, seems to give a clue to the character of Christ's sufferings as the heir of promise, and as the faithful servant in the hour of suffering.

In the psalm it is the sufferings themselves that are shown; you see there the inward feelings, the deep tide of woe that rolled in on His soul. The heading of the psalm has a meaning—"The hind of the morning." The hinds go forth in their timidity in the morning—the harbingers of light, but disappearing as soon as day breaks. If anywhere in the Old Testament light breaks out, we have it in this psalm. In the gospels we have everything that was done to *insult* our blessed Lord; but that was not the bitterest part of His sufferings; and all that He suffered from *men* would only leave the question of *sin* untouched as regards *God and one's own conscience.* Sin has been committed before the infinite God; whoever has been guilty of it is obnoxious to His wrath. Wherever there has been sin there must be judgment. If I look into Scripture I find the character of God is perfect holiness. If He who is perfectly holy has to do with the sinner, what must be the consequence? Into however small a compass I bring my sin, it has been done against an *infinite God.* Where do we see what sin is? Is it in the ungodly High Priest, who blasphemed the Son of God? Was it in the Gentile monarch, who sanctioned the crucifixion? No; it was when God's judgment was poured on Him for man's sin. He stood as the *sin-bearer,* and it is there only we get the true measure of sin. When there "made sin for us," He had not one single ray of light from God to strengthen Him. He represented sin before God, and the sustainment He had—always had—from God now ceased to flow. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" These words have quite a different meaning in Christ's mouth to what they have in any other. Have not you often used this language when God was really drawing you by His own love, but you were afraid to trust

Him? and are not you ashamed to think of it? But it
very different in *Christ's experience.*

The word "Eloi," &c., in the quotation is expressive
nearness—"My God." It is not Hebrew, but Syriac. T
expression coming forth to Him who was always so r
has deep force in it; and the only moment in which
could be forsaken of God was *this*, when He was tak
our sins upon Him. He was always in the full sunsh
of God's favour; for He was *holy*. Christ could h
been no *victim* if He had not been holy and separate fr
sinners. Nothing shows the perfect purity and holi
of the Lord like this psalm. A Jewish rabbi has ca
it a psalm of repining. True indeed there was a d
agony of soul when He said, "My God, my God, w
hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from help
me, and from the words of my roaring?" But alr
immediately afterward He vindicates God: "But thou
holy."

What a state poor Job was in while waiting for G
But such is the contrast of Christ here. It is as tho
He had said, "I have taken this place of bearing s
before God, and I *ought* to know what the award
There was a spring in Himself that enabled Him
say, "Though thou forsakest me, I will not forsake th
Thus the essential purity and divine perfectness of w
He was stood out in all that depth of humiliation. W
a contrast we should exhibit in such circumstances!
we have nothing from God, we have nothing. Tho
there is the well of water in us springing up to ev
lasting life, we are dependent upon the divine source
cause it to spring up, and we are utterly and entir
dependent on God. Not so Christ. Though He stoo
down as the servant, He was not limited to that. (*vv.* 5-

He links Himself with Israel (*v.* 6): "I am a worm;" that is, "I am in the place of a sin-offering. I am a worm and no man—unworthy of the slightest notice or regard. Thou oughtest to turn away from me. Thy holiness requires it." You must have some measure with regard to sin. What is your measure? From the buddings of it in the garden of Eden to the last heading of it up in the Man of sin there is no divine measure of sin but on *the cross.* If we think of sin anywhere else but here, we get a human measure according to the circumstances.

If merely a human being had been here as Christ was, and forsaken of God, the well of water would have come to an end, and he would have been ready to call on the rocks to cover him; but in all this agony, when all the full tale of judgment was poured out on Christ, it left His perfectness untouched, and only made the brightness more visible. The contrast might be illustrated by the difference between a new-born babe left out in the open air all night, and a strong man in the same exposure. What would be certain death to the one would be overcome by the other. There was no comparison between the first Adam and Christ. The first Adam was no person to do with God. How could he? What was he to settle with God about sin? He could not, but Christ could; and He has settled it, and there is no fear now of God saying to a poor sinner who believes, "No; you must go and taste the sufferings which He bore on the cross." It was God's Lamb who suffered there, and it was to carry out the idea of *mercy* in the divine mind that He came: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." When we look at this force of the first verse, what sort of sanction does it cast upon sin in a disciple? Do you talk of a little sin? the sin in

your members little? See what Christ suffered for it. Nothing will make the disciple, the servant, so anxious to be free from sin as seeing what the judgment of it was now upon the cross. There is no such thing as little sin to the child of God who has this measure. Everything in yourselves, in your family circles, everything around you, ought to be brought into judgment, the sentence of death passed upon it: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 24.)

The great thing in the present day is to learn that grand principle—"Cease to do evil; learn to do well." Not only sins in the general, but *sin*, have been judged in the cross of Christ; and if God is to show forth His *holiness* most efficiently, it is in the forgiveness of the poor sinner through this judgment which has been passed upon Christ rather than in the final condemnation of the sinner. Our hearts little understand what He bore in that hour. There is not room in our minds for more than a certain quantity of sorrow; but what another would not have felt, He gathered up and felt it *perfectly*. It is an important question, dear friends, as to how far *death*, as to anything that is noxious, is put away from your minds. Is a grave, a sick-bed, a terrible thing to you? or do you feel it better to depart to be with Christ? A remarkable test as to this point was experienced in France in the time of the Revolution. A poor woman was dying in a part of the town which was already cannonaded, and to be thrown down next day. The question was, Who would go to her? One said, "I will go." It was put before him what it would involve; viz., loss of life. But he said, I died 1,800 years ago." He went, and was preserved. (2 Cor. i. 9.)

CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

II.

PSALM xxii.

THERE is one thing very helpful in studying truth connected with the several glories which centre in Christ in the latter day; viz., that they have their importance according to the place in which they are displayed. There is a vast variety in the expression of these glories. The majesty of the divine effulgence is seen through the Son in His glory as Head of the Church, as the last Adam, and as King of the Jews, in the heavenlies and in the earthlies, but there is a correspondence to a certain extent in all these fields of glory.

Government and worship even belong to God, and in a sense they are always the same. God is the object, and the Spirit is the medium, and both roll *from God*, while they return *to God*. God displays Himself in the heavens. Earth is the place where God cannot come because of sin, so there is all the difference between that which is *above* and what is *below*. Compare the last eight chapters of Ezekiel with Rev. xxi. and xxii. The former is a reflection of the latter. God and the Lamb cannot be the temple below, so there is a temple there. In heaven there is no need for a temple, for God and the Lamb are the temple. In government, too, there is a difference *above* and *below*: The bride is associated with the throne, the dominion and power in Revelation; in Ezekiel it is *Jehovah*.

Still the millennial power wielded by Christ on earth will be the counterpart of what is in heaven. Thus Christ is the centre in all, God is the spring in all, and the Holy Ghost is the power in all. There are thoughts in connection with redemption that are universally true. The serpent's head is to be broken. That was prophesied in Eden, and all was working towards the fulfilment of it. Christ is the atonement in all the dispensations, and by the Holy Ghost is the application of it.

Another thing is very helpful to see; viz., the Headship of Christ. He is the second Adam, the second Noah, the second King of Israel, the second Head of the Gentiles. In Psalm xxii. there are the breathings of Jesus in suffering and in joy. The Psalms are the expressions of the Spirit of God in man on earth. We find in the same psalms often the language of Him who is the Fountain Head (who knew no sin), and of those who speak of sins committed by them. *Christ*, being perfect, could say, "My flesh crieth out for the living God." *My* flesh cannot do this. I would ask you to examine whether there are not two parties often to be found in the same psalms. One perfectly pure; the other, sin there, but not imputed. The first two verses of this psalm take up the language of these two parties; verse 1, the language of Christ Himself, and verse 2, "I cry in the daytime, and thou hearest not," &c., although true of Christ is at the same time the expression of the Spirit of Christ in the remnant when they *have little faith*. This may be the genuine expression of the Spirit of God in us, not understanding the full work of atonement. There are verses in the Psalms which seem true of the Church, and true of Israel, because *true of Christ*. The Church is not intended in the primary application, but as in Christ, a rib of Him, they are true. (*v.* 2.) The

Church ought to see judgment behind the cross. God begins with us, as He did with Paul, in heavenly glory. "My measure," God says, "is *Christ*, whom I have received up to my right-hand." That is the way God begins with us. You may say, It was not so with me. Why? Because you are Judaized; but you ought not to have been on the ground of the ten commandments at all. The Jew is not on the same ground as we are; he has to learn to measure man, and to find out all his opposition and ruin.

There was an element of sorrow peculiar to the Lord Jesus. He took the cup of trembling, the wrath of God, *alone*. There had been the waters of the Deluge, the fire of Sodom, but no wrath was like that Christ bore, because none ever tasted what sin is but Christ, when He settled the matter about it. Sin can have nothing from God but judgment. When sin is even upon His Son, His word to Him is like this: "I have no light for thee." The Lord Jesus tasted fully what it was to be in the presence of God as the Sin-bearer. It is quite distinct from the sufferings spoken of in the following verses of the psalm. There, and in the gospels, we get the expression and narration of His bodily sufferings. But all these heaped up together are not to be compared with His inward anguish. The brilliancy of who Christ was, nowhere shines out as in this psalm (see *v.* 3), the expression of which is, "If I am forsaken, thy name must be taken care of." (*vv.* 5–7.) Why did He trust, and get no answer? The answer was, He was a sin-offering, and ought to be treated as an unclean thing. As the sin-offering, Christ had taken our sins as a fillet about Him. (*v.* 7.) There is the detail of sufferings—the taunt, the pout of the lip, &c.

Verse 9, is very remarkable, pointing out a peculiar element of the mind of the Lord Jesus. (This, too,

Paul, Gal. i. 15.) In the experience of the depth of trial and suffering, Christ remembers that God His Father is the God of *providence*. This is most important for the people of God to remember. See Moses and Jeremiah also. God knew what vessel He wanted, and could fit for the service. This adds great poignancy to the sorrow expressed in the first verse. The Lord alludes here to the providential care of God. "Thou hast sustained, guarded, cared for me up to this moment, and I am forsaken now!" "Crucified through weakness" is a word that had its full meaning for the Lord. He knew what a fainting heart meant. Verse 19 is also remarkable. He will not give up the truth, whether for Himself or others, that God was His strength. He would not give an answer and speak for Himself, because of the burden He carried on His heart. In verse 20, there are objects dear to Him which He will not let go—"Deliver my darling from the power of the dog." He will speak everything for God, everything for the people, but not for Himself. Contrast the Lord's conduct here with our own in the wilderness in all ages. In Him there was no murmur, no tossing to and fro, no restless impatience, no struggling under the yoke. Were you ever in sorrow like this—comforters not one? But you had Christ in heaven, whoever else you had not.

One word here in connection with the latter part of the psalm. I cannot help thinking that, although it is not quoted in the gospels, Christ had this spring of comfort in His soul all the time. He had the word ever laid up in His heart, and though He is not cited as Jehovah's fellow in connection with turning His hand on the little ones when the other part, "Smite the shepherd," is quoted, He must have known the connection. There

were three grand titles belonging to Christ as the deliverer. As *Prophet, Priest,* and *King* He had been presented to Israel, and He was all these as the sin-bearer, and the servant of Jehovah. This added to the bitterness of His being seen by them, not recognized, but rejected of God. An ambassador would feel a private mark of the sovereign's displeasure, but he would feel much more deeply his rejection in open court. Christ, though the faithful servant, was here on the cross not recognized. (*v.* 22.) What a verse this is! There is not a waver. He knew His Father's name. His glory and His first thought is to proclaim that name to His people. There were the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. There are three concentric circles round Christ—His brethren, the seed of Israel, and the ends of the world. (*vv.* 22-24.) We greatly fail to realize the Lord as the Leader of worship. I believe we little think what it will be to hear the Lord Jesus sing praise.

In verse 24, there is the subject of praise. What am I to sing about with Jesus? we might say; *He* will sing of things I cannot touch. But no; the Lord will choose a theme in which we can join; and when we see that it is *God's* faithfulness to *Him* that He will sing about, is there one who will not echo "Amen" to His praise? "He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted." When we remember how He went down into the lowest judgment for our sins, we can sing with Him that song. We must not forget the range of the glories of Christ. There is not only the Church in the heavenlies, but Israel on the earth coming up to keep holiday unto the Lord. Then Christ will be the setter-up of *worship* as well as the changer of dispensations. What a scene the millennial age will be! All the power will be His to sustain the

government as Son of man, as well as He is the Leader and Sustainer of communion.

Verse 27 shows the extent of worship; verse 29, Israel's history. When they shall get back a little to their earthly centre, all their energy will be used in setting up antichrist. Thus will be fully proved that they could not "keep alive their own soul." Then, when fully broken down in their extremity, a remnant is brought through to serve the Lord Jesus. See the bearing of all this practically (as to the finished work of Christ being in heaven). What does God show us of things on earth? When the testimony shall be on *earth* Christ will be on *earth*. This truth (Christ in heaven) is the key to unlock the systems of religion from Constantine downwards.

Is our religion *down here?* Where is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus? Where is the worship of which the Holy Ghost is the power, Christ the centre? Nowhere, but as connected with heaven. Another thing to be noticed is, that there is all blessing for those whose sins were borne by Christ on the tree. You must either say, "Christ has borne all my judgment for me," or else you must know you can have no standing before God in the judgment. What is your thought about Christ being at home, though you are in the wilderness still? If you are out in peril and suffering, you are glad that the objects dearest to you are at home in safety. Thus do we not feel joy that the earthly course of Christ is finished? It ought to be so. Ask yourselves this question, Do you love the Lord? Then is it joy to you that He has entered the rest? If our thoughts are right about Him, it will make our sorrows light to remember that He is no longer exposed to suffering. "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father."

GOD'S WAYS WITH HIS PEOPLE.

PSALM cvii.

(THE state of soul in which a pilgrim nearing home would like to be found was first alluded to.) Were I to say to those amongst us who are moderately-instructed Christians, In what consists joy in the Holy Ghost? what is it? you would probably say that the peculiarity of our joy is based on *faith;* the mercy of God acting in His Son Jesus Christ, and bearing on each heart with divine power. Seeing this basis, our joy is not what is in *self*, but in what is in *God.* I would add, not only so, but there is a dispensational peculiarity in the joy which *we* ought to have, resulting from faith, flowing out from the Resurrection Man, borne up and seated at the right-hand of God. Not only are we saved by grace, but in the peculiar way of these dispensational privileges in the Son having come forth from the Father's presence, that we might be of heaven and not of earth.

Again, as to our joy, a great deal depends upon our walk. *All* the children of the Father are blessed, but those who are not walking as before Him, lose as to joying in God. These remarks, I repeat, are in connection with the joy in which we desire to be found when the Lord appears, or when He sees that we have been left here long enough, and takes us to be "absent from the body, present with the Lord."

Connected with this subject is the sovereignty of God

in relation to the use to which He puts different vessels that He forms. Four examples will illustrate what I mean: Lot, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. In these we have two classes: first class, with respect to Lot. Lot's position was *false;* the position of Abraham was true. Lot was a righteous man; his righteous soul was vexed from day to day in Sodom. Why was he so troubled in circumstances—losing his property, his children, his liberty, everything swept away from him? Why, in the very place he had chosen, and where he looked for ease, did he find those from within to vex and trouble him? Because he was in a false position from the very beginning. He had a call, and starts with Abraham on the ground of that: he goes out, but all his after course had *self* for its centre, and he did not keep before him what God had said, "The land that I will show thee." Thus his was not the walk of faith, though he had the call. He did not hold the call; it did not characterize him all along; hence his fallen position. This always leads into suffering of a peculiar kind. Still God's mercy is shown in it; he proves how the vessel may be thoroughly wrecked down here as to testimony; works all burnt up, and yet at last, though suffering loss, he is saved so as by fire.

This wonderfully explains as to Christians in the present day. I believe there is often a mistake in calling in question whether a person is the Lord's or not, because they do not come up to the standard of our own minds. But God did not question whether Lot was a "righteous man." We want first largeness of heart to judge as God judges, and then grace to see where the failure is. It is said, "Oh! they have not light." No; that is not it. I believe that the present state of Christendom originates in this—people *have not learnt to walk with God.* Are you serving the

living and true God in whom is your strength, and from whom your joy springs? If not, the truth will not, cannot, have its power.

The cases of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are very different to Lot's, and they end in brightness. Abraham's is a course of steady faith all through. In him God showed out how a saint could walk with Him, as a son with his father. There is a remarkable repose about it; whenever trials came he was always outside of them. He walked in the light; and as to the details of his life, they are characterized by a happy, peaceful passing on. He sees Isaac happily settled, and then comfortably withdraws from the scene. In chap. xxv. we have a few simple details which might have been given of any individual who was not the father of the faithful. He was just waiting to be removed. Thus one sees the servants of God who have served their generation. The Lord seems to say to them, "I know you; I remember your works." But old age has come—the faculties are weakened, and the Lord keeps them as it were in the hollow of His hand; but they seem generally to sink down without observation after a life, it may be, of much service. There is evidently sovereignty in that. We see it especially in connection with those living in times when the truth brought out is the truth God is dispensing specially for the time, as it was with Abraham. Abraham belonged to a set of idolaters; God lets a stream of heavenly light into his soul. He embraces the promises, and, becoming a pilgrim and a stranger, he sets out for the city of God; but he does not get it—there is the *clue*—but he is taken away from the scene, and he goes on spinning the thread in the glory.

ISAAC. Chapter xxvi. is the only chapter which gives any account of Isaac as the principal person in the scene.

Before, Abraham has the prominent place, and afterwards Jacob. Even in chap. xxiv. Isaac is not the chief person, though the servant (there is no evidence of its being Eliezer) is sent to fetch a wife for him. But directly we find Isaac placed in the position of being the patriarch, a few simple details are mentioned. He gets the promise renewed; he plants, sows, digs again the wells. The reason of this is, that when the true Isaac, the joy of God, comes, none could sound His person. I know the Father as I do not know the Son: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." The Son's life here below was a revelation of the Father. Every ray that beamed from Him told out about Him who was not seen, not about Him that was seen, whatever farther revelation there may be of Him in glory.

JACOB. In Jacob we find *family* dealings characterized by God's mercy to him, in spite of all his trickery and artful ways. There is contention in the flesh for the things God had promised. In spite of all, God makes good all blessing connected with Christ. With Christians now God has to break down the flesh, and then what can they do? Nothing but cry to God. What marked Esau is what so often marks believers now—*flesh*, which only cares for the gifts of God so far as they minister to the flesh; or, like Jacob, they value God's gifts, but seek to take them in their own way. In due time we see God leaves the empty professor, and takes up the younger, the one on whom He had set His eye, and brings him back to the father's house. We see the sovereignty of God's love in all that. Again, God shows His sovereignty in the choice He made of Moses and Aaron to their specific services. The honour was put upon Moses altogether at first, but

he breaks down; and then we see that his special service was that of mediator, Aaron that of high priest. God settles whose name shall be written in the book of life; but there is a speciality of place which He settles also. God ordered that Isaac should have the place of being the expression of the Son in communion with the family as head upon earth. In Isaac's personal history we find he fails as to his children. "Isaac loved Esau, Rebecca loved Jacob;" and there was want of fellowship between Isaac and Rebecca. This want of fellowship is almost always productive of a split in families. If the child sees partiality in parents, all confidence in their love is gone. There is nothing more important than for children to see perfect oneness of mind in the parents as to putting their *will* in its place. The end of Isaac's course was a quiet one, and very blessed.

In the case of Jacob we have the channel of testimony brought out. Here are the two natures—the world acting on his heart, the flesh, and that which corresponds with the Spirit in us; not, however, in the same way in which we have since the revelation of Christ. The conflict between the two natures *then* was the result of the supplanting of the first Adam by God.

It was difficult for a Jew to understand the conflict which was going on. God begins with us in seating us in Christ in heaven. In Jacob there is the old nature at work continually. God met with him outside, and brought him in; but still he went on as before. When on his way back to the land he ought to have had full rest of soul; but we find him arranging all in his mind, as if he had no God of resurrection as *his* God. Why thus? Because he was acting from the old nature; and hence it is that there must necessarily be a pulling

down from us which there would not if walking in the Spirit. If God had permitted Jacob to go on, it would have been putting His sanction on those ways; but Jacob finds, after all, that what was in his own heart was not enough for himself. God pulls him to pieces, and makes him to know that with all his arrangements he cannot ranquilize his own poor timid heart. When he really got close to God, it was quite another thing. Then he learnt *what he was;* before it was all his family circumstances, &c.,—that occupied him. Just as it constantly is with us when we are out of God's presence, planning, scheming, &c., God lets us down into ourselves just to show us what we are; and when we get to our wits' end, what do we find there? Nicely ordered plans? No; we have found utter weakness; but we have found *God* there. There is the "brook," and we do not know how to get over it. But we have found God meeting us *there*, and carrying us over to the other side; but it has been like Jacob halting upon the thigh. If you have learnt the gospel, you know God is now measuring *Christ*, not *man*. But still the old nature is always showing itself, especially if there is any energy of character; and God cannot give the blessing till He has broken down the flesh, and made you go crippled all your days. One cannot carry one's vessel full of grace, unless one has been content to be accounted by one's neighbours the chief of sinners.

When I look upon young Christians I feel for them exceedingly. I know that they *must* learn this lesson as to the flesh, but I do not know *how* God will teach it them. Young Christians have not learnt experimentally that the flesh is a bad thing. They have not been in prominent places, set upon a pinnacle, and the flesh, they may argue, has not come out in them as in Peter, in David, and

others. If wise, they may learn what they are in the presence of God from the testimony of the word, from looking into the wounds of Jesus. It is learning it *inside* the sanctuary, otherwise you must learn it *outside*. As for aged saints, and those who are established, I know that I find it uncommon hard, when perhaps I have been in communion with God, to have to say, Well! must I then go on still with this horrid heart of mine? Yes; and as one goes on, the worse one finds the flesh to be. Jacob had to learn what halting flesh was all his days, even when he went before the king. You must learn more and more of the evil of your flesh, as you learn more and more your portion in Christ.

In connection with these four characters we learn that every one has his especial time of trouble. *Lot* had his first wrench out of the world in being sent from his country; but he found that he had got under the government of God—of Him who would not allow him to go on quietly, and sitting down to rest where he chose. (The flesh is always inclined to sit down in the wrong place.) God was going to destroy that place, and Lot must be roused out of it. *Abraham* has two troubles—his wrench out of his country (and it is not pleasant to leave all); and then, through going down into Egypt, he had *one* experience of the same kind that Lot *always* had—he sold his wife, and lost his honour. (If God says "Give," and you say "Take," there is unbounded joy, as Abraham found it at mount Moriah. If God lays His hand upon the vine, and the fig tree, and the flocks, and asks if you are satisfied to have it so, and you reply, "Yes;" then you rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of your salvation.) Both these troubles of Abraham were at the beginning of his course, both the wrench from the world, and the bitter experience

he had as to the flesh. With Jacob they came at the end of his course. In all this there is the moral sovereignty of God seen in His making the vessels. There may be many ships leaving the port, and perhaps only one out of the many reaches the harbour without damage. One comes in at one time, another after a storm which may overtake it at any part of the voyage. It seems as if a soul must be left to itself, "*alone*" with God, to show just what it is, and to be weaned from everything but *God*. God there communicates to the soul from Himself what he would not get elsewhere; and all this is connected with God's forming a vessel for Himself. God not only puts you in Christ, and purges you that you may bear more fruit, but He also has to form your character. A parent might witness in his children improvement in certain ways that had been unpleasant, and yet see that the spring in the character was untouched; another time he may be able to get at the root of those things which grieve him. This is what God does; He at last met Jacob in himself, then the springs are touched, the flesh is crippled. I may be at the close of my pilgrimage, and I may have been brought through the process, and still God may have to retouch the vessel in some points. There is great joy in seeing that, *little* as we are, we have a connection with all His plans in His eternal counsels from the beginning, and with all His glory hereafter. There is not a single minute thing which touches any one of us, which is not thus connected with Him. There is rest of heart in seeing Him thus above, below, around; God is never taken by surprise, never taken aback, never startled. He counter-works. He brings out blessing according to His own counsels, notwithstanding all the horrible way in which Satan works things around us.

PART THIRD.

EARLIER MINISTRY.

CONTINUED.

LECTURES DELIVERED IN 1854.

Part Third.

EARLIER MINISTRY.

CONTINUED.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

MATTHEW xvii.

WE get different views of the transfiguration according to the position from which we look at it. Looking at it from outside, as it were, we have to notice that it took place in the time of Christ's *humiliation*, at the time *man* was in weakness. The drift and scope of it will not be understood if that is not seen. It points to the earth's great Sabbath, and comes in as the last thought of redemption. God puts things in the hands of the Lord Jesus, and where the vessel (Israel) is not in a state to hold or retain the glory, Christ can hold it in the millennium; so when Christ was a man on earth, though there were none to understand Him, and He had to trace out His path all alone, He fully shewed forth the glory of God. It is true that a certain holiday has to be spent on the earth in the millennial time. There will be shown amongst Israel the divine glory in Christ, and the whole earth will be the witness of it. Israel may

not be able to hold it, but there it will be displayed. The transfiguration just points out the character of that holiday, and it makes a direct appeal to the hearts of the children of God as to their feelings about it. The difference between a well-taught Christian and one little instructed about millennial truth will be, that the latter will be absorbed with the thought. "We shall be with Christ." That is quite true; but it is also true, and it will be perceived by one who has studied Scripture, that we are to reign over this earth with Him in its unchanged condition. The earth is to be reigned over by the Church. Christ will bring us into the Father's house as His bride. That is our blessed portion. But He not only says, "Come along with me," but "You shall reign with me." We shall have a resurrection body; but this *same body* changed. "This mortal shall put on immortality," and, as brought into connection with this present world, we shall reign over it.

Another thing connected with the bearing of the transfiguration on Christians in the present day is, that three of the disciples, Peter, James, and John, were *selected* to see what was the sustainment of the heart of Jesus in what He was to suffer. They were eye-witnesses of His majesty. (2 Peter i. 16.) Their being taken up into that glory, revealed to them the certainty that they would be there too. Do you know this? Has the Spirit revealed to *your hearts*, as it was revealed to *their eyes*, that a scene of brilliant glory will open over this six days' groaning earth—the glory of the Lord Jesus? It is revealed with quite as much certainty to you as it was to Peter, James, and John. It is revealed to us by the Spirit of promise, the earnest of the inheritance; but it was revealed to their sight. Is it a sweet thing to you to think of seeing

Christ? that before to-morrow's sunrise you may be in that very glory into which He has entered? The Spirit of God tells us, that as surely as Christ is on the throne of God, so surely will He leave the throne, and take a throne of His own. Are the kings of the earth brooding over that thought, that Christ will hold the sceptre over the earth? No; they are not. But it has broken into your souls because *you are to be there.* The Spirit brings you the earnest of it now.

Only three of the gospels give us the account of this scene—Matthew, which is peculiarly connected with the gospel of the kingdom; Mark showing forth Christ as the servant; and Luke as the Son of man. In 2 Peter, where it is cited, the subject is the *light of a risen Christ connected with this earth.*

Now let us look at the scene a little from *within* in detail. Some things are very distinct—the glory and the grace; the grace in glory, if you please. When the Lord was here, there was glory in grace; but there will be grace in glory then. Divine glory broke out from Him in His position of grace down here; *e.g.* when He brake the barley loaves, &c.; and now we see the other, grace flowing out amidst the circumstances of glory. It seems to me exceedingly important, the truth I get here. There has been extreme long-suffering in God in keeping Himself away from this earth. If He had come in, it must have been instant destruction long ago; but in grace He has come in the person of *His Son,* picking up, one after another, poor sinners. But after the thousand years it will be all glory. From Adam downwards, the great thought was, *grace* to be shown forth in the person of Christ. Moral glory and physical glory there were in Him. It was all hidden, indeed, but *there,* and grace was

to flow out, and in the place of service and subjection which He took.

After His resurrection there was another manifestation of His grace in His lingering on the earth. They knew Him as the Nazarene in a glorified body. A new expression of His grace we have in that He has sat down "until His enemies are made His footstool." All these two thousand years of His *waiting*, in which we have a new phase of His grace, will add to His *Messiah* glory; but by-and-by He will be ministering grace from the court of God, and that will be *grace flowing out from glory.*

Verse 1: He took them up to "an high mountain apart," &c. It was a mount *connected* with earth, not away from it. Revelation xxi. shows the heavenly city *coming down* from God out of heaven, and connecting its glory with the earth; for it is over the earth. Thus the heavenly city, the earthly Jerusalem, and the Gentile world will be connected.

In verse 2, we have three distinct thoughts. What will the joy of the glory be? Christ being there. It will be no strange place for you and me when we get inside the glory; for He will be there. The chief Person in the scene will be that same Lord Jesus. The beauty of that Person is the second thing; "His face did shine as the sun." Third, "His raiment was white as the light." In Mark it says, "His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." White indeed! unspotted white, that robe! His blessed hand could touch the leper, without contracting defilement, as no one else could; so His righteousness can cover all our deformity, without taking a stain from it. Brightness and purity are the two thoughts descriptive of His raiment. In the first two verses, then, we have the *place* and the

circumstances of the glory; first, the place over the earth; secondly, the person of the Lord in all His beauty and perfection. *God* can measure His purity, but *man* cannot. Another thing to be noticed is their communion. It was not meet for man to be alone—this was the divine mind; and you little know the heart of the Lord Jesus, if you think He can take the glory all alone. No, it would not be meet for *Him*. God could be *alone*, but not *man*, nor the Son of man; He must have us with Him. It is meet He should have us with Him.

Mark the persons who are to be with Him—those who have slept, and those who are changed. Moses and Elias with Christ; and the three disciples hear their communications. What is their topic? In Luke ix. we have an account, where it says they spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. One is apt to think, How can subjects which occupy Christ be of interest to us? But it will be the Lamb slain! When you see the Lord Jesus, shall you have nothing to learn from Him of His death? It will be the *one thing* that is part of all subjects.

Verse 5: There came "a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." How little we really enter into what the Lord Jesus is doing now that He sits upon His Father's throne; but *here* He is in the place where He is really in communion with man. The bride will be sustained by the presence of Christ throughout the millennium.

What are these three foolish Jews, the disciples, doing there? What a hard thing for the flesh to be silent in the presence of God, and in the presence of the glory of God! Peter speaks; but God says, "Silence! my Son is the only one who has a right to speak here." Then Christ comes with the words, "Be not afraid." *He* has the only

right to speak in those one thousand years. Then, *how* does He use the liberty? When He was here before it was not so. Christ was dumb, and might speak. If He had spoken, it must have been destruction then. But now, in the scene before us of glory, how does He use this power? Not for destruction, but for the most beautiful display of grace such as never was yet; for it will be according to *man's circumstances. According to* GOD it was on the cross; but Christ was straitened in His circumstances then, and there was a hindrance to the flowing out of His heart in His journey to it; but in the glory He shows it all out.

Where will all the sorrow be then? *Gone!* It will be like the bright shining after rain. Where all the suffering? *Gone!* for glory will be sustained by grace, and all that cannot stand the grace and glory will be put down.

THE JOY OF THE CHRISTIAN.

JOHN xiii. xiv.

MY desire is to present a few simple thoughts in connection with the joy of the Christian. There is nothing the heart of man looks for more than satisfaction. Rest is the first thing he seeks, and beyond that JOY, which gives more sensible pleasure. The poor world seeks for both, but in vain. If we would build our house in the gate of Sodom we shall find satisfaction only for a moment. To say nothing of God taking away the things heaped up round about, they cause sorrow and no satisfaction; God meets the cravings of the heart of man perfectly and eternally as becomes Him as God, so that there is in Him what satisfies and what gives joy. I believe these two things are really one—satisfaction and joy. We often make a mistake, because we take human instead of divine thoughts. The Scriptures show that the soul of man can be satisfied with God alone. The soul was made for Him, and when it obtains *Him* there is peace and joy. A soul divinely filled is as full as it can hold.

I remember being struck, some thirty years ago, with God forcing me to seek after Himself. It was by the sense of sin in myself, and that I as a sinner was going down an inclined plane, as it were, to destruction. This was soon followed by peace. Amid all the things that were shown up, around, and within, I could say, "Well, I know

this is the way of peace; and even if it be imagination, which the infidel thought of my heart would suggest, it is better to let the imagination go after *God* than anything else." I was more happy at least than I was when seeking the world. The experience of a Roman Catholic I met with yesterday was remarkable as to this. He was one who had been thoroughly sunk in the system. Four or five months since, a sister in the Lord gave him a Bible. There he learnt that there was a God, and a Christ at God's right hand. "I was ignorant as a beast before Him," were his words; but though without bread, money, or any of the common necessaries of life, he had peace, and this brought him satisfaction. He had found Him for whom he was made, and there was light in that dwelling.

All this is a reality, no matter of feeling or imagination. It is a peace and satisfaction according to that which satisfies *God*, and brings *Him* rest. God now brings sinners to Christ, saying to them, "Here is the Son of my love; I have put Him at my right hand; and the biggest sinner that is in Him there may have perfect peace, perfect satisfaction, because I have perfect peace and satisfaction." The peace of the poor sinner is thus eternally formed upon what God finds His peace, and satisfaction, and joy in. It is thus divinely formed; for the foundation on which I rest is the same as that on which God rests, though He knows more about it of course than I do, just as the father of the poor prodigal knows far more of joy than he ever can, but it is on the same foundation. The presence of this peace and joy in our hearts comes from the Holy Ghost ("the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"), and the soul, while shut, folded up, as to the *full understanding of all that is in God*, can understand peace on God's foundation.

Perfect joy in the Christian is associated with God. There are many things to rejoice in besides, and which are necessary to our being brought into it and sustained in it; *e.g.* mercy, forgiveness of sins through His blood, and God's righteousness to cover you. The joy to your mind may be "He has washed me," and in the consciousness of your spotted robe, you may delight in the thought that God has just put on you an unspotted robe. But there is something more than this. God rejoices in our being washed and clothed. And there is another thing connected with it. You sometimes rejoice in one part of the blessing and sometimes in another, according to your feelings of the need at the time. As the mother feeds her infant with the spoon, so God gives us to take little by little of what His mercy has done. But there is a time coming when we shall not want washing, clothing; but in the Father's house the sense of *God's electing love* in setting us amongst the children in eternal glory which will never end, is that which will fill the soul *eternally*, while still the power and the beauty of that blood and that righteousness will never be so brightly known as in heaven. Our redemption being accomplished, and ourselves brought into it and glorified, our joy will be in GOD HIMSELF. All thought about our need being done with, our joy is in association with God Himself, according to the riches of His grace made known to us in Christ Jesus. There are different characters of satisfaction and joy for the believer which may be viewed in four different aspects. First, as regards the saint here below in the present time; secondly, the Father's house; thirdly, what may intervene—"absent from the body, present with the Lord;" and fourthly, the time which succeeds the Father's house, although we can never be said to be out of it. All these characters of joy

are in association with the God of all grace, of whom Christ said, "My Father and your Father, and my God and your God."

Now as to *present* joy, brethren in the Lord. Children of God, what is your joy at the present time? I believe chap. xiv. 23 brings one element of joy very vividly before us: "If a man love me, he will keep my words." This is in connection with fruit bearing, as in chap. xv. 11. The reference is not here to our abiding, as shadowed over by the love of Christ. That is always true, even when also there is failure. Peter's love to Christ, and Christ's love to him, were very different. The Lord's love to Peter never altered, but Peter failed to abide in His love. When Peter thought of his love to Christ, all the fire went out, and his heart grew cold, and he soon began to swear that he did not know Him. But when he thought of Christ's love to him his heart warmed. There was always real joy flowing into the heart of Jesus every step of the way, because it was always in conscious association with His Father. Thus every step He put down firmly and steadfastly, as saying, "Well, now, this is a step in association with my Father." If I go and build a house in Sodom, I cannot have the assurance of association with God. God would say, "He has joined himself to idols," but He cannot give me up. God's association with Lot did not cease, but all the consciousness Lot had of it was, "his soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." Abraham was quite different, he had the joy of conscious association with God. Your present joy depends on your association with Christ, your conscious association with Him. Now, what was Christ's position with respect to this world? Pilate and Herod could shake hands if Christ is to be crucified. After Christ's death Satan is

called not only the "prince," but the "god of this world," and the "friendship of the world is enmity with God." How then can I have joy in God if I am in association with the world?

John xiii. There are three things to be noticed connected with the walk of Christ, and which He would have us to mark now that He is gone. First, Christ is associated with God, while morally displaying the character of God. Emptied Himself, He washes the feet of His disciples: "Ye are clean, but not all." Christ referred then to His cleansing blood.* The saint needs constant cleansing, and in this the Lord gives fellowship with Himself. If you have been enabled to present the blood to the conscience of fellow-sinners, there is a link formed between you and them, and you must have a regard to their walk. The *Father's* name is on the *brethren*, and if their fect are defiled you must seek to remove the defilement. This brings with it great renunciation of heart, and is one of the things by which we have association with the Lord Jesus. Secondly, there is another thing you will find connected with it. There was the flesh working in Peter, and if you care for your brethren in the way the Lord did, you must be prepared to find in them the same spirit as that of Peter. They will perhaps assume that you have no right to interfere between them and God. The flesh thus works in those who have the Spirit of God, but you cannot forbear, because the Father's name is upon them. All our experience in the world comes to this—"*tribulation.*" "In the world ye shall have tribulation." You may have it divinely in fellowship with Christ, or you may have it in a human way; and then,

* It may be doubted whether the reference is not rather to the washing with water (the Word) at the new birth.—ED.

going to feed with the swine, you must have discipline. The desire of the Christian must be to bear fruit, and it will not be that which puffs up. No! he will say, "If there is any fruit, it is the sap rising up from the root;" and the sweetest taste to his soul will be that he can say, "We love Him because He first loved us." Every one of us has something to do for Christ. Every one of the things we do the rest of this day we should be able to take up and do to Him, and do it heartily. If we cannot say, "He has given us a thing to do," we should pause. That matter which, however simple, is done unto Christ, will bring great joy to our hearts, because it will bring into association with Him in separation from the spirit of the world which rejected Him. We shall realize the result of keeping ourselves from the evil while in the scene of evil, and this is the position in which we properly are.

Connected with sorrow there are two things to remark; first, the normal position of what Christ was here is just reversed with us, if we are finding, or seeking to find, our satisfaction in the world. If the bride finds herself setting up her tent where her Lord was murdered, the consciousness of it must bring sorrow. But, secondly, there is another, a deeper thing. The Spirit, who is the spring of joy, will be grieved if we walk contrary to God, and there can be no joy. The whole of our gospel is dated from heaven, the throne of God. It is the declaration of the estimated value by God the Father of what Christ did when He died, rose, and ascended. "We will come and make our abode with Him." What a shadowy, unreal, senseless thing the joy of a Christian must be to a man of the world! With the Christian, what he possesses is no dreary imagination, but a solid reality. Christ loves me as God loves Christ, and it was by the excellency of

His power, commanding the light to shine out of darkness, that I know it. It is so large that it could never have entered the thought of man. It is divine, it is a reality. The world cannot see Him, and therefore they cannot receive Him; they take knowledge of what they can see and hear, but beyond that they have nothing. There are certain things about which I cannot talk to a man of the world. How should he understand the Father's house, who has not the Spirit of adoption, crying, "Abba, Father"?

"God hath shined into our hearts." It is a figure of speech, but it is a *reality* above all the realities of this age. In spite of the heart even of the Christian, which veers round and round like a weather-cock on a windy day, he finds God the same, and His shining into the heart makes joy. Suppose we see a little boat with a light in it going up against the current, and the strong rough current of a mighty river—the waters almost cover it—it seems to disappear, but it rises again, the light is unextinguished, and it continues on its way, the light cannot be put out, it is a reality, and there is some unseen power which keeps it burning. So there is the Holy Ghost in the Christian which the man of the world cannot understand. *He* dwells there.

There is another thing we cannot talk with the world, or with a worldly Christian, about; for they cannot understand what Paul meant when he said, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ; which is far better." (Phil. i. 23.) Staying in the world because there is godly work to be done is a strange thing to them; and in their case, being "absent from the body," there is nothing but uncertainty, therefore "better to depart" is quite incomprehensible. Why cannot they understand it? Because the feelings are

all blunted by being like Lot in Sodom. But to a Christian in communion with Christ, it is no dark uncertainty to be present with Him, to be where He is: it is no uncertainty that Christ is in heaven. There are two things that make the saint desire to depart; first, I go groaning on in this body of sin and death, and I shall drop that by-and-by. I have a wicked heart; you cannot trust me; you do not know but I might turn out like a Judas or a Peter, denying the Lord; you cannot depend on me. This a self-emptying thought—surely if this body of sin and death were laid at rest *that* would be gone. Second, there would be gain where I go. When Christ was here His moral glory was in the emptying of Himself every day: "I came not to do mine own will," but He emptieth not Himself thus now. Christ is filled with all blessing, with all power, and with the fulness of divine glory. He is not sustaining all the glory outwardly, as He will be in the kingdom; but were I called to leave the body to-night, I should be where all the fulness is shown to be His; where He is causing the fulness of His grace to flow forth for poor sinners. Is this a dark uncertainty? Do you say you know nothing about it? Do I know nothing about it? There is no veil upon the face of Christ to hide Him from us, but there are two veils alluded to in Scripture. There is a veil over the soul that walks carelessly; the one on His side is removed entirely, and on my side it will be removed for ever when the body is vacated.

Where are the bodies of Paul, Peter, John? They were logs and clogs to them; but, laid aside, they are all taken care of, watched over by God, until He shall put body and soul together again. Is Paul there in the dust? No, Paul is not there; Paul is present with the *Lord.* Why is so little said about that time—"present with the

Lord"? For a very simple reason, Scripture never gives us anything which has nothing to do with men's responsibility. When absent from the body, responsibility will cease. The question is cut short there, shut up in the hand of our God and Father, and of Christ Jesus our Lord. This truth, that there is no light where there is no responsibility, cuts through a hundred difficulties; *e.g.* as to infants. Directly their understandings open we are responsible to instruct them in the Word, but we have no light expressly beyond that. Again, I believe that the whole power of understanding the joy of departing to be with the Lord is in *communion.* If in the presence of Christ you have got your heart warmed, there you will rejoice in prospect of being with Him for ever.

The third scene which awaits us is the Father's house. But suppose that it were revealed that the Lord Jesus would rise up from the Father's throne, and come for us to-day at 3.30, I am not so sure whether, if I might, I should not desire to depart to be with Him at 2.30. The more He puts me through, the more I shall know of Himself and His guardian care. Thus I do not see why we should shrink from falling asleep; for Christ has passed through it all, and it is now no valley of the shadow of death to the saint. Dropping the question of selfishness, and of work to be done, it was real joy to Paul to think of departing, because Christ was everything. God's people are in heaven; my brethren are there. I see heaven getting full of them. *I* should like to be one of them. If only my work were done, the sooner I can get away the better.

Some talk of disgrace in being called away; others say it is only a dark, shadowy uncertainty beyond; but these are most unscriptural thoughts, and the want of joy in the

prospect of departing is only the result of want of communion. One thing that the saints who depart will have is *precedence in the resurrection.* Scripture always shows us God's way is to begin with the weakest first; as, for example, in the exhortations to wives, children, servants. When Christ rose, it was Peter to whom He sent, because he had most failed. So in the resurrection, those who come up first will be from the position of weakness. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." The position of hope now is different to that when Christ was in the wilderness in humiliation; then He was looking forward to suffering, and afterwards the glory. Now He is looking forward to the time when He shall bring us into the Father's house; there will be nothing then to soil or mar the purity or hinder completeness of the joy. Now He holds His power in abeyance, but when He rises up it will be to use divine power in putting down all that is adverse. It is the *Father's* house to which He will take us. It will be a scene of His own. The Church is *His*, and where He is, there she must also be. Have you a distinct thought in your minds about the Father's house in contrast with the glory? Nothing shows the peculiarity of our position more than this. The Father's house is not like created scenes, such as the new heavens and the new earth. The *Son's* heart must be there, the Son's mind there. We must have the unselfishness of the Son to have the joy of that house. It is a scene no longer needing watching on our part, nor the downstooping of grace from God as now. It will be full, perfect *communion.* There will be the full inshining and outshining of God, and there the only-begotten Son will have His rich reward.

THE COMING OF CHRIST, THE HEAVENLY CALLING, AND THE MYSTERY OF THE ONE BODY.

Acts i. vii. ix.

THE name of Acts of the Apostles has been given to this book; but it contains rather the acts of Peter and Paul. The object of the Spirit of God in it is the setting up of the testimony of God here in the world, both to the circumcision and uncircumcision. It does not go beyond that. Nothing of what we find in the epistles is in it. It begins with Peter, James, and John to the circumcision, and ends with Paul to the uncircumcision. One thing which very remarkably comes out in the book is the self-will of Paul, and how it gets corrected by God. The result of that is in the last chapter. We see that he is content to go to the Gentiles; but before that he was always seeking after the Jews, although his commission was mainly to the uncircumcision.

We were looking last week at the symbolic teaching in Scripture with respect to earthly and heavenly things. In Old Testament times the symbols used were very inferior to that to which they pointed. By a symbol I mean something laid alongside of another to give an idea of it; *e.g.* a map descriptive of a country. In teaching about earthly things God always uses symbols. Thus in Daniel a glorious empire is symbolized by an image—a tree,

beasts—all *inferior* to the things they are intended to show forth. And in Revelation there are the same kind of illustrations, so in teaching *us* God uses something of the same kind; but He uses that which is part and parcel of the thing itself. There are three striking examples of this teaching in the Acts, in which the three great doctrines of the coming of the Lord, the heavenly calling, and the mystery of the one body, are set forth. These seem to form a background to these three things connected with the Church.

Chap. i. I believe that the very first teaching as to the coming of the Lord that was apprehended is contained in this portion. It is a simple recital of a most marvellous fact, while the disciples' hearts were still occupied with thoughts about the earthly kingdom. Here is a cloud in which He rises up, and they are left behind widowed. While He is speaking to them He rises, steps into the cloud, and is received out of their sight. The person of the Lord was gone from amongst them; He was no longer with them, as while walking to Emmaus, and appearing and disappearing among them; but they looked up, and saw His person going away. They were not in particular sorrow or distress; they were preparing for testimony, and the light comes from a Person whom they loved disappearing from them; and the assurance is given that He who so went would *so* come. This is the chief bearing of the chapter.

My impression of the coming of the Lord is, that it never was known until *Christ went up on high.* It is one thing for God to reveal a thing, and another for *us to know it.* It was a very different thing to be thinking that some fine day a Person would come down upon earth, and take up things here just as they were, and go on with them,

and to have God's thoughts about the Messiah. We find here the disciples did not know the Lord's mind. They had been closeted with their Master; but they understood Him not. He said to them, "You wait here until you have power from above;" but they were gazing up into heaven.

This was a moral as well as a physical position, like the Thessalonians, who were called to wait for God's Son from heaven. "I wait for the Lord. He is gone up, and what has become of Him there? What can this mean? He is the One we love." It is Himself they want, and the word is given them, He "shall *so* come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Think of their position. They had had a loved Master, One who loved them most deeply; and now seemed just the time for the kingdom, and He is gone and left them. What can they do? What can the heart find to delight in when the Saviour is gone? They are left there in the widow's position to bear His rejection. They have not yet *experienced* it; but that was their calling. They had, as it were, stepped into the shoes of their Master—"as sheep for the slaughter"—to be witnesses for God. They were to go into that dark scene of sorrow and rejection which they had never calculated on; for they had never thought how low He must go; never calculated on death and resurrection, and that they would have to take that place of death, and wait for His coming again. I do not say it was not revealed, but they did not understand it; though while their hearts were beating about the kingdom, having their own low thoughts about it, He says, "Do not trouble yourselves about time and season. I shall launch you there in time; but meanwhile you are to be my witnesses. You are to be in the place of obedience, and to have power given."

He departed, and they went back to Jerusalem, keeping together in communion as disciples of the Lord Jesus. The buddings of the actings of the Spirit of God now show themselves. Peter, in taking up the retrospect, sees that one has failed. This was not of Peter's flesh to discern; for he applies passages of Scripture, which seem to belong to antichrist, to Judas.

This preparation for testimony is very remarkable, the promise of the Lord's return, and their waiting position. It may be said, Why do you set so much importance on the coming of the Lord? I believe there is no testimony without it; you have no right goal. Everyone is a witness for something. Lot was a witness of what a divided heart is; Abraham of what the walk of faith is. If a person is going to be a witness for God, he must have his goal marked out. If your goal is that "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth" through the present preaching of the gospel, you will set yourselves to work out of your own resources; you will be pumping up from nature; for your goal is a false one, and much of your work will be burnt up, though love to Christ in the heart will be recognized. This will be the result of setting an end before you God has not shown. The coming of Christ from heaven for you is the pole-star for the Christian. If a Christian is not looking for this coming, you may be sure that his testimony is not according to the mind of God.

There is uncommon peculiarity in the aspect of the Lord's coming, as given in Acts i., which is very corrective of any false thoughts about it. My own first thoughts about His coming were quite Jewish. I looking forth, say, upon Europe, ask, Can this thing be brought up to the glory of God? No; the stone cut without hands will break it all to powder. I now see why this was allowed;

for I was thoroughly settled down in the world, and God let the sharp edge of His truth come in and sever my link with the world, and it came in just where needed. Then afterwards some of us took up the coming rather in connection with the circumstances then surrounding us, and it should be so used; but I think that these are not the normal, simple ways in which God would have us look at it. It is rather this—the *heart* never can be satisfied until we have seen the Lord Himself. The disciples were gazing up, and they saw Him whom they loved enter the cloud. This did not produce anguish, but watching. Would He not appear again in some other part of the heavens? They wanted Himself. (*vv.* 9, 11.) This completely comprehends the double coming. They saw Him go up, but nothing beyond; He was lost to sight. We shall see Him above the created heavens first, and then coming down to earth.

Here are two grounds of pre-eminent importance. To begin with the lowest, I find people turning away from prophecy, as they say—those who really have this heavenly hope in their hearts. After a reading-meeting lately, in which we had been looking at Eph. i., and were very happy, a brother, fresh in the sense of grace, came up to me and said, "Oh, I am sorry you have been speaking so much about prophecy, I never enter into it!" I made no reply, but shortly after said to him, "You have no thought of seeing the Lord Jesus?" "Indeed," said he, "it is my one thought, I shall never be satisfied until I see Him." "But you will not see Him in the Father's house?" "Oh, yes, indeed; it is there I want to see Him!" "But it will be in some spiritual way," I added. "How can you go into the Father's house?" "Oh, I am to be changed; I shall be there!" "Ah!" I cried, "this is the very kind of

prophecy that I care about; your *heart is waiting for Christ;* you have there the earnest of the inheritance, the Holy Spirit of promise." People must not confuse prophecy with certain hard questions about the future. But if souls are dealt with we shall often find that God has put the hope into the heart. Then we can say, "I hold you to what I find wrapped up in your heart; you have the root of the matter there." Then, secondly, it is important with respect to testimony. When I have the goal, it shows me the right road I am to take. Am I, for example, to set about reforming Italy? If I am looking for Christ's coming from heaven to take me up, I can pick up every heart to show that Christ is what it needs. Again, I do not get the right form of the hope before my mind unless it is Christ Himself that I wait for, and not His things only. I do not give my proper testimony, as part of the bride of Christ, without seeing it is the person of Christ with all His possessions. All that He has in heaven and earth is nothing compared with the relationship. We are espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ. I have a place in His heart, and that enables me to meet all the difficulties and all the disappointments of the way. Is not your heart so forward as that, whatever your position here, you cannot be satisfied without Himself? That is what the disciples were feeling here. The coming of the Lord, then, is connected with two things; first, the loving heart finding the sweetness of His presence; and, secondly, the character of the testimony.

Chapter vii.: In the testimony borne by Stephen we have the HEAVENLY CALLING of the Church. The landmark of the grace was to be Jerusalem, "beginning at Jerusalem." It was a clear, clean work of grace, and the one who cursed and swore was the very one to speak about the grace. The

result of it is that hearts seethe and boil at such a presentation of grace. They say, "We cannot have this; away with him!" Not satisfied with having rejected Christ, they reject the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the person of Stephen. Then Christ shows what He is to His rejected people. Here is a man, as it were, covered with bayonets, looking up: the cloud parts, and the power of the light of God communicates itself from Christ, and shines down into the bottom of Stephen's heart, and he is without any fear. He sees Christ *standing up*, a new position (His sacrificial work was done). Stephen there gets the sympathy of Christ for His rejected servant. Christ was looking down to cheer and comfort while he was being stoned. The proper answer to the sorrows of earth is the sympathy in heaven. There ought to be more rejection on earth than there is, and then there would be more of the consciousness of Christ stooping down to pour in all the riches of His grace from the throne of God. This scene shows the Church is here. Christ is not hidden as in Acts i., but heaven is opened, and all the glory streams down. The whole bearing of chapter i. is showing a risen Christ preparing a testimony which was to be given in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Chapter ix. gives a view of the incompetency of *earth* (not only Jerusalem) to receive the testimony from heaven. All had failed. This now comes to our position here. How much more ready we are to be a testimony where it is irrespective of *God's glory*, and merely for the salvation of souls. There is so little readiness in us to tell out what God is and what Christ is. This is very humbling, but we ought to be ready to speak out God's grace, "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear." But there was a sweet savour of Christ to God in those that were saved

and in those that perish. Stephen bore the testimony though they would not receive it, and he suffered the consequences. If he had been silent, he would not have been stoned.

There is then in chap. i., the personal hope; chap. vii., the sympathy of Christ with His rejected servant. Chap. ix. shows us communion with an individual on the highest possible ground of grace. Christ had dealt differently with Peter. Before He commissioned him ("Feed my sheep"), He tested his conscience about his denial; but He finds Paul, who had been a rejector of the Holy Ghost, and mad against Christ, and shows how heaven will give testimony if earth will not; "And you, Saul, shall *tell* how I have some who were sinners one body with Myself." Here was the revelation of the *mystery:* "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me?*" Those whom he persecuted were a part of Christ Himself. This is more than in chapter vii., where the testimony was, that there was room for the Church in heaven, though they would not have it on earth, and that sympathy from the heart of Christ was flowing down to those who were treated as He had been Himself. But here in chapter ix., it is something God-like; indeed, it is properly divine sympathy, not towards a *servant*, but to one as part of Myself, "Who touches *you* touches *Me.* You have not only touched poor Nazarenes, but *Me;*" and now Saul the blasphemer is to be a vessel of that grace in the midst of that scene of desolation. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit."

Weigh well whether you are bearing testimony to these three great truths connected with chaps. i. vii. ix. Are you happier to meet Christ's feelings about testimony than your own? It is strange how little we understand the freshness of Christ's feelings now. Would we wound the

heart of a loved friend? But surely Christ is more easily wounded than the dearest earthly friend, and surely we cannot say that He deserves to be thought of last. You think of yourself, I think of myself; but Christ is saying, "There is a member of My body," and yet we do not like to go and bear testimony where we think it will be rejected. There is something most solemn in this vital union with Christ. Does He see us thus a member of Himself, and yet content to go down and live in Sodom, saying, "I know I am saved from hell, I shall have a place in the New Jerusalem, so I shall not trouble myself"? God has taught the Church the coming again of Christ as He had never taught it before. It was never divinely received in human minds until after Christ left His disciples. They knew that the "seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;" but the prophets did not understand how He would come a second time, and while the hearts of the poor remnant in the coming day will be dragged through their trials without understanding their position, it is the portion of the Church now to be expecting the Lord from heaven. The Church is the special witness of this hope, and thus it may be said, No coming of Christ, no Church at all.

One passage shows that the very essence of the Church is connected with the coming, and proves that while the truth of the Church was not revealed before, God had it in *His mind.* Eph. i. just speaks of the riches of His grace, but in verse 8 of His wisdom and intelligence—"having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on

earth; even in Him, in whom also we have an allotment* ... who first trusted," or who forehoped, "in Christ." We have even now an inheritance. It is Christ. We have a special place—His bride: what Christ is, and what He has, is mine in heaven and earth. Is the property of the husband the wife's glory? No; it is himself. Therefore our place is special. This is our allotment even now. Having the full mind of God as to His counsels, we hope before they are developed—*we* (it is in the *plural* number) we Jews, as he might say, were put in the place of hope before you got yours. There is a comparison, then, between the Church's position and what the Jews will have to go through in the sifting. The Church gets the doctrine of death and resurrection when Christ gets it, before the glory. Israel will look back and learn how they might have seen it, and the Gentiles also; but the Church is in the same position with Christ taken up to heaven *now*, and we are taken up and let into all the secrets of God's counsels of love. He teaches us that flesh is nothing—but He has rent the veil, and has looked out from heaven and called me by *name*, tells me I am a member of Christ's body—and that all His sympathies are in exercise towards me, and that *He Himself* is my inheritance, and that all His glory is mine. He would say to us, "Let this sympathy you have with Me shine out, and that you are a *body of forehopers* taken up and blessed, not in flesh as others were, but in spirit taken up there to be enabled to be a body of *forehopers* down here." We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, but here we are to go through the experience of His rejection, while having the hope of *His* return. God developes the Church in the position of this utter rejection. He (Christ)

* The same word as used for the division of the tribes.

found the earth so poor a place that there was no prepared spot for His foot, so He calls out a people to pass through the same, but to be forehopers.

This brings out the hope of the coming properly taught. There is an earthly and heavenly way of looking for the Lord. Ours is not that connected with the nation—we must begin at the other end, where Paul began—vital union with the risen and heavenly Christ. We are fellow-members, being "one spirit with the Lord," one body, and if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. If the foot stumbles, the hand instinctively without a thought goes out to the wall to save the body. Our hopes begin with His person, and we have fellowship in His hopes. There are things for which He is waiting. He has sat down waiting, or "expecting," until His enemies be made His footstool. It is blessed to know that all connected with rejection here, cannot separate the Church's hope from the full favour of God. She is a widow, not drunken, but in full sympathy with the Son of man sitting in heaven, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all, though down here. Now what am I as such to expect while here? The favour of God as assured to Christ at His transfiguration. Then I cannot but realize the light of God's countenance upon me, though I cannot go round to all His possessions, and say "I have got them." I have God the Father and Christ, but here while waiting, though I have the joy of God in my heart, there is plenty of sorrow outside. If I take the pleasure of the world, and go its way, I shall have chastening, for I am left in the place where it murdered Him, and is ready to murder me if I am faithful.

In review, then, we see that the coming of Christ, though it had shone out, had never been in the heart of

the person in such a manner as to say, "It is not His *goods* but *Himself* I love." We are not going through, and getting blessing in *nature* as the Jews and Gentiles, and then having to look back and seeing all was so, though they did not understand it. Do I really prize suffering *now?* Do I realize that all the rollings up, and breakings down in my path, and the rattling of the enemy around, are part of the result of this blessed position of fellowship with Christ—eating from the same plate, drinking from the same cup? And can I say to each fresh outbreak, There is another proof of my fellowship? Alleluiah!

THE CORRUPTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

READ 2 PETER i. 16–21; JUDE.

THERE were two masterpieces of evil which the preaching of the gospel had to meet—the self-righteousness of the Jew, and the idolatry of the Gentiles. If you trace the history of the propagation of the gospel onward, you find another character of evil prominent. Still you do not find this third form of evil in the later epistles—2 Thess., 2 Peter, epistles of John. The Spirit of the Lord was occupied in warning about the seducing spirits. Nothing would preserve the little children from that seduction, but walking in the power of the unction of the Holy Ghost which they had received.

The whole subject of Jude is taken up with the delineation of evil, which has its rise in the bosom of Christianity. The evil which will bring in the execution of judgment, is the evil that has its seed-bed and its ripening in the midst of professing Christianity. The Spirit of the Lord has seen it needful to delineate the evil, in order to preserve the saints during its progress, as in Peter, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness." (2 Peter iii. 17.) There is nothing so striking as the mercy of the Lord in this. We might have questioned whether, as all had so departed from the truth, we might not give all up. The word of God marks its

sufficiency in this respect. He will not leave His people without a guide in the darkest time. The remedy is there; the principle by which the soul is to be sustained is there. And not merely that the saints of God shall be secure in Him in their individual interests, and get safe to land, but God has provided that the subjects of this grace shall, while they are in this present world, be witnesses, and He has left them here for the very purpose. It is a wonderful mercy to any of His people who are put into this place of witnessing, but it will be plainly a sorrowful place. "My flesh," says Paul, "had no rest." There were always men bearing a witness more or less clearly of the grace of God. Be assured a testimony in the last days will be attended with peculiar difficulties and trials, because it is further on in the evil. It is the "deceivableness of unrighteousness" that works up to the last stage before judgment comes. If you look at that fearful picture in 2 Timothy, you will find that it is not the sensual outbreaks of lust, but rather all that is more intellectual, and above all, "having a form of godliness."

This being so, the Lord directs His saints to the character of evil, not that we are to point to an evil that cannot touch us, but to be assured *that the evil that is at any time prevalent is that by which each saint will be affected.*

I do not think that any of us have any idea of what the real type of a Christian is. The Church has let this truth slip. In the early ages of the Church "they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," and longed for a martyr's crown. This is where our souls must be brought before the Lord, and we shall find that there is His grace to meet us amidst all that would press us down. The testimony may be feeble, and yet true. I notice the posi-

tion in which the Lord would put His saints in the midst of the prevalence of this evil.

Observe the commencement of the epistle: "Mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied." (*v.* 2.) There is no limit to the grace of God. The divine blessing comes to be the portion of the soul that is set to receive what God has to give. I believe it is much more individual action than we think. There is no consulting between hands and feet as to action. Their harmony lies in healthful fellowship of life, subject to the Head above. *The unity of the body is maintained, and just so as each individual is actuated and guided by the Head.* If near to Christ, I do not dare to allow anything to come in between my soul and Him. In this way there would be no schism in the body.

At the time this epistle was written there were many things in the Church that one would not sanction. (*v.* 12.) Individuality of responsibility to Christ presses itself here. (*vv.* 3, 4.) Some you must take care of, not in the way of suspicion, but where their principles are marked out; you must beware of them. This contention for the faith, what is it? Laxity about doctrine to one whose soul has been buffeted about by Satan will only be another form of carelessness about Christ. "If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?" If that which is to be the basis on which I build is destroyed, what am I to do? This "faith once delivered to the saints" is a comprehensive revelation of what God has given about His grace, that which gives us the living connection with all the fulness of the Head.

From 2 Timothy iv. 2–5, it is clear that even the man of God, maintaining sound doctrine, must count upon "afflictions." He may reckon that he will have to labour with

many tears and conflicts. In verses 6–8, Paul says, "I have *kept* the faith." He would not surrender it, but he had to meet persecution and coldness, and a thousand oppositions personally. The next thing is, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." So in Jude, there should not be the least surrender of God's truth. We need to have our souls exercised as to what the truth is. We should rather give up a limb than give up God's truth.

Verse 4. Grace was turned to evil, and insubjection to Christ. The first evil there was the profession of Christianity taken up to cover ungodliness. What is the argument here? He had been speaking of contending against corrupt Christianity, and, lest it should seem strange, he reminds them of what had been before. There was apostacy in Israel met in the same way by judgment. Then he passes on to the angels. Man does not like to feel his own ignorance—that he cannot look beyond God's revelation. How wonderful! There is not a sphere of existence in the whole range of God from whence motives are not drawn by God's Spirit to guide us. There were angels, and apostacy once thinned their ranks. Then in verse 7, he gives an instance of natural corruption, upon which there was the manifest intervention of God's hand in judgment. These are put out as beacon-lights, or expressions of what God has effected in His dealings in the past, and which will have their answer in His judgment of the apostacy of Christianity.

Verses 8–11. Here he gathers up the ruling principle of this evil in three well-known characters in Scripture. The "way of Cain"—way of infidelity, the opposite to Abel's way; and not only the way of infidelity, but also the cruelty and dislike which it always will have to men

of faith. Infidelity has many shades. Wherever faith is not in exercise, there will be the natural infidelity of the heart. Is my thought brought into subjection to Christ? The range of faith should be there. I should say with Paul, "I am not sufficient to express a thought."* The spirit of the age is the spirit of infidelity. Let us look abroad for a single moment, and we see the counterpart of what is here represented. Balaam is just as distinct, taking up the truth of God and using it for covetousness. It is not given for selfish ends. He was teaching association with the world. A man who takes up God's truth short of the glory of Christ comes under this censure. He may go on and preach for reward to subserve his purpose. Our souls ought to be jealous when the teaching of Christianity is for gain. How ready are our hearts to think that gain is godliness! Oh that our hearts were divested of this!

"The gainsaying of Core" is direct rebellion against all constituted authority; it is man's self-will exerting its supremacy. There is a rooted dislike to all that bears the impress of faith now—and this is infidelity. It may be said this picture has features so developed, that they must have been seen in the Church, and put out. But mark, God might take up the first line of evil that we might be guarded against it all the way. It needs spirituality to detect it. That man is not a Christian who sets aside the doctrine of Christ. The mystery of godliness is this: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (1 Tim. iii. 16.)

Verses 20, 21. There is nothing more sustaining than

* This is probably a paraphrase of 2 Cor. iii. 5.—Ed.

this. Our own proper place is so full of blessing, and so simple in its character. How can I build myself up? By constantly having my heart exercised upon the object of faith, seeking to have the ignorance of my mind removed, meditating on the word, getting the heart nourished by all that feeds our faith; not satisfied, but as the faith is nourished.

Oh, if building up ourselves were our object, how constantly would this book be the object of our *meditation*, not of our reading only! We cannot get on in this faith unless meditating on the word. I cannot get nourishment by prayer. Everything should be the subject of prayer; but "praying in the Holy Ghost" is understanding what is for God's glory, and expressing it before Him. It is the range of the thought of God's Spirit. This we are called to; and not merely the apostles, but those who are "preserved in Jesus Christ."

You and I ought not to be satisfied with going on an hour without the consciousness of the love of God. There is no cloud upon Jesus. Nothing can intercept our joy but getting our hearts occupied with things below. I may wander from my place of rest; but "*keep* yourselves in the love of God." Mercy will come and take you out presently: "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." It is one thing to exhort others, and another to be up and enjoying the reality of the beams of God's love. There is that in the love of God which will enable us to go on, and gives the power of service.

THE ANTIDOTE TO EXISTING EVILS.

JUDE 24.

YOU will find that this epistle shows out the true character of everything that is of man. There is not one portion of God's word more calculated to make us sing than this epistle, and high notes too.

The joy of a Christian at the beginning was, that he found something of God in Christ that met all the ruin in himself; and the way that God communicates blessing to the Christian proves that He will ever be with him. The more trial, the more God says, "I am with you."

"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ." No title; he does not take the place of an apostle. He is a *servant*, a title in one aspect common to the whole family. It was brotherhood. Then he shows to whom the epistle was addressed—"to them that are sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." In verses 3 and 4, he shows what the circumstances were under which he wrote.

When the Lord Jesus Christ went up into heaven, God sent down the Holy Ghost from heaven, and formed in the world *the Church*. He goes on to say, "there is failure from first to last." He begins with "the common salvation," and a wonderful salvation too! "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." He turns back to the whole history that had gone before,

and says, "These are specimens of those who will corrupt themselves;" then, closing it up, he brings in the testimony of Enoch, as one who bore witness of what the evil would be in the end. Observe how this servant of Jesus Christ calls up the testimony of all these, as telling what the declension would be, the forsaking and betrayal of the common salvation. And the effect should be on our hearts, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

The higher the privilege the worse the corruption. If I look from the beginning of God's dealings down to the last, I do not find one period in which the deposit was so large as that given to us, or the corruption so thorough. Here it is a cold-blooded, deliberate thing; but, then, if I see there what apostacy is, what declension is, do I stop there? No. Jude passes through that; and he gets a second note of mercy struck in connection with the common salvation—God coming in, and the security of the people who had faith.

How strikingly he winds up in verse 24. Observe, he does not merely in the last verse take the place of one who sees nothing in those around to sing about, and therefore turns to God. But more than that, he says all this ruin is not without God's permission, or the token of His being in the midst of it. Those circumstances are the circumstances in which God's wisdom will flow out. God is not going to lose His Church. The same waters which destroyed the world flowed in to float the ark. The same wisdom of God will be displayed to you individually, "He is able to keep you from falling," &c. Do not, therefore, be discouraged or cast down; do not think God will forget you in those circumstances. "He is able to keep you," for He is "the only wise God our Saviour." How the apostle gleans up his experience of God. Look up

and see what sort of a character God will exercise towards you in those circumstances. Notice this blessed thought! Come what may, there will be a people "sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called;" and they have a certain course traced out for them. You, dear friends, do you find that God has preserved you in Christ Jesus? Well may "mercy, peace, and love be multiplied unto you."

Verse 20. Observe, in this day of darkness there is to be no groping, though all is confusion outside; but hold fast what you have got; you know you are called, "sanctified by God the Father," hold that fast. Hold fast the things you know God has done for you. Give me the place and time of trouble, and I know God will be with me. In times of trouble He is always close at hand. The Spirit of God dwelling in your heart, let Him lead you forth in "praying in the Holy Ghost." We know, as the children of God, that we can tell Him everything; but when we come to pray, as in times of trouble, and there comes in the thought, "Which way is the Lord going?" that is not praying in the Holy Ghost; or when desires are expressed, as with Paul, "Take away the thorn." Afterwards he prays in the Holy Ghost. God has His own pathway. God may see something in my heart to humble me. While the ear of God is perfectly open, you will have to learn that you are not to dictate to Him. The simplest way is to "cast *all* upon God, and pray in the Holy Ghost."

Verse 21. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Do not forget the love of God. The whole heart of God is beaming upon you; His love is always upon you. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Either the word here "looking for" means having the expectation of the appearing of the Lord Jesus — every

thing here is going into confusion; but in the midst of all, the cloud of glory is coming down, and up the Church goes—or the word "looking for," &c., might also mean it is mercy unto eternal life, and therefore you may calculate on everything till you get there. God calls whom He likes to His house. He called me on the ground of mercy, and that secures me. He that calls is responsible for every difficulty. I cannot tell how I am to get through; but He that calls me will provide.

Verses 22, 23. A description of what the conduct of the saints should be in these times. It is no question of tolerating what is about; you must hate it. There is to be a positive repugnance to it; not merely the principle you are to hate, but even *the spot* of the flesh, the least connection with it. If the heart of a saint who is called, chosen, preserved, is where it ought to be, it is assured of God's presence, and will try to bring others out, whether by strong or by gentle means. You cannot go into the place where the evil is and tolerate it. Why are you left in the wilderness? Do you know what God's thoughts about Christianity are? that the best thing He ever gave is corrupted? And are you spending all your energy to lead the people of God out of the evil? And why? Because we should be the expression of what God is, "God our Saviour," the God who has said, "This one is for myself, and I am able to keep him in all difficulties." It is God really showing out His wisdom in the present time. God is at work, bringing those whom He separated, bringing them on as the One who is able to keep them from stumbling. This brings God very close.

Verse 24. How exquisitely beautifully He takes in the different parts of what would be the anxiety of the heart. We look around, and say, "How is it possible? How

can we get through?" But if I look as the man whose eyes were anointed (the prophet's servant), it is no wonder. Let the only wise God show His competency to keep me from stumbling. There will always be something for you to strike your foot on in the wilderness. "And present you faultless before the presence of His glory *with exceeding joy.*"

Oh, dear friends, if our eyes were but more conversant with the presence of His glory! He does not forget the glory. The Spirit of God does not forget the glory to which we are predestinated. You and I forget it, and therefore get discouraged, and say, "I never shall get there." Yes you will, poor feeble thing. He will present you as a spotless one, thoroughly cleansed. There is many a thing we might not count a spot; but in God's sight it would be very spotted.

Well, He will present you faultless, trophies of the cleansing power of the blood of His Son. He will bring us there, having to tell, "I am a *poor sinner* called by grace. I was always afraid of facing difficulties; my heart was always afraid. But I came here, and simply His wisdom brought me here; and now all the sorrows are past, and all 'exceeding joy.'" We shall not be merely there for His praise, tokens of His wisdom, but there with hearts able to enter into it all.

Jude looked at all that, and said, "That is where I see the wisdom of God displayed." Persons ask sometimes whereabouts I find myself. I say, "In the last four or five years I have had a deeper sense of the apostle Paul's experience of the churches. I am not discouraged as to all the sorrows; I can only say God wants to multiply proofs of His wisdom. I expect to find greater trials; but in them all God will make us know more of what He Himself is."

WORSHIP.

REVELATION i. 5–8.

THERE is one remark which I would make about this portion, which will commend itself to the mind of a simple reader—that it comes in in the way of a *parenthesis*. If I may be allowed the expression, it comes in *intrusively*. It is an expression of the feeling of the heart of him to whom the message came—an expression of the worship of his heart. It is a common thing in Scripture, to find the course of the thoughts of the speaker interrupted by some burst of praise which could not be restrained. You have a similar thing in Romans xi. 33: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" when the apostle feels the subject too large for his heart to contain, or for his ability to explain.

If any one knows God, or Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, there will be assent to this, that the heart of a saint never finds itself in the presence of God or of the Lord Jesus without worship. With a poor sinner who does not know grace, it is something beside worship. A saint finds something beautiful before him, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

This book is not like the gospel of John, though written by the same person. The gospel of John in a peculiar way gives the history of the Lord Jesus as Son of God, and of

the saints as sons of God. But in the Revelation, connected with the throne, the titles are not such as lead to Abba, Father: saints here are "kings and priests."

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, which was, and which is to come, and from the *seven Spirits* which are *before His throne.*" Even the Spirit is seen in another character. Again, the Lord Jesus is not seen as the Saviour, but the "Prince of the kings of the earth." Directly the apostle John finds before whom he is, worship must come. There were affections in the heart of the apostle, and directly the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is presented to his soul, "Oh," he says, "that is the One who has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!"

One remark I would make on this portion, the circle of which comes before the mind. I would look at the picture as a whole. The apostle had the sense of such a fulness connected with the works and offices of the blessed Lord so laid upon his heart that he must give back to God. One of the most remarkable things in redemption is that we are enabled *to live to God,* of whom and to whom are all things. No one can say, "I serve God," who does not know redemption accomplished, salvation finished. If you do not know salvation as completed, you never can find yourselves in the presence of God but some horrid sin will start into your remembrance, and make you wish to get out. The saint can say, "I am here, and God is waiting to hear me." There is nothing in the presence of God to daunt him. He knows the eye of God and the ear of God are waiting for him. If you have not been washed you cannot think of getting into God's presence without fear.

To produce worship in us is the highest thing the love

of God does. It is not what He makes us for others. He may take the Church up, and make her the habitation of God through the Spirit, but that is not making the Church something for God, for Christ. Now when we get into worship—that is what we get—it is all of God, of Christ. God will have His people in His presence to express their delight in what God has made them for His Son. God sought such to worship Him. God in heaven was desiring to hear the praises of John in banishment at Patmos.

"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory," &c. (*v.* 6.) Not like the brazen censer—it was a *senseless* censer; but the praise goes up from us with affections warm, and we know the position in which God stands in to us. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." He is the receiver, and we the giver of worship. This is not merely the blessedness of a man able to praise; but in this picture we have the Person worshipped, and the one worshipping.

I would ask those who are not Christians, "Have you ever had a thought of the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who desires to have your praise?" I do not think nature takes up that thought—the graciousness of the Lord Jesus in standing, desiring to hear free, spontaneous praise.

To us who are Christians there is many a sweet thought in this little song of adoration. First, observe the way in which the apostle singles himself out. When Luther was once pressed as to justification by faith, Gen. iv. came into his mind as a reply, "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering." The person of Abel was accepted, and therefore it was simply of grace. There was only one place for Noah's dove to rest—the ark, and there is only one place for us to rest—the person of the blessed Lord. This song does not begin with, "To Him be glory and

dominion," &c., but it marks out the person of the blessed Lord as its object. In glory we shall be able to express as we cannot now. There He is before us, and there our souls find perfect repose.

After that he proceeds in a beautiful divine order: "He has loved us." Who loved? The Lord Jesus. "He washed us;" and behind that, to an intelligent mind, comes in a volume. He loved *us*. It is a very different thing to say, "Yes, in Him there is love." He loved *us*. There was this real affection in Him—a personal love; that is the reason why praise comes out. The Church knows she is loved by Christ. We can turn to the Man in glory, and say, "He loved *us*." How shall I know He loved us, and not praise? There we get beautiful consistency in the continuance of the praise, "Washed us in His own blood." We had got sins, and He washed us from our sins in His own blood.

The only thing spoken of in connection with these people, is *their sins*. If you stand in God's presence with the sense of what the Lord Jesus has done, you know He has put away your sins. It is sweet to look at this point. The poor sinner has sins, and they are met by the Lamb's blood. The remedy for sin is pointed out, and we have known the use of this blood for ourselves. He that provided the blood has applied the blood. Most divinely perfect—the remedy is sufficient for the need.

Look at that word, "washed us," connected with the Lord Jesus Himself. Many have no rest in their hearts because they think they must do something themselves. The answer is, Christ first and Christ last. *He* washed. No heart is set free for praise which does not see that the Lord Jesus is the One who washed. Christ began the work, and Christ went on with the work. That word

"sins" meets everything in my conscience, for nothing could escape his eye. Do you suppose that in any of those the Lord Jesus has washed He has left any sin behind? There was the love of the blessed Lord, and then comes, "He washed us from our sins."

He was the Lamb, and the blood was presented by Him as Priest. If you take up the details of office, connected with the shedding and presenting the blood, you will find many of His offices displayed. There is something very blessed when you think of the blood of the Lord Jesus as connected with conscience. It was the Spirit speaking to John, God's thoughts about the blood; and when the mind comes to look at the thing, peace is found through the blood of the Lamb. This without controversy.

There is great beauty if we look at the order of the song. "That washed us from our sins," comes in as meeting the want of a soul in the presence of God always. But he does not stop there: He goes on to enlarge and prepare the blessing, and show what it is. "And hath made us kings and priests;" not sons with the Father—that we are, but this is not presented here. Christ may be presented in any character, and the eye of faith says, "That is the One that washed me." It is surely the expression of the wonderful love of God with regard to the Church. No measure in the human mind can ever comprehend divine love. He was forming something for His Son—giving glory to His Son; and in desiring to give glory to His Son, "He made us kings and priests." What is the thing which always occupies the mind of the blessed Lord? The glory of God. If there is a kingdom and a temple to be opened, He must bring the Church there. (John xvii. 24.) What sort of love must His be, that in the

presence of God *He must* have His Church there? It is the sense of this love that makes the heart turn and render back, "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

We want to search ourselves about this question of praise and worship. If your hearts are not full of praise and worship, there is not the savour of Christ. I beseech you to see whether or not you are holding your proper place as worshippers. Do you know what this praise is, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

ADDRESSES ON THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

Introduction.

REVELATION i.

VERSE 1. The "revelation" (unveiling, uncovering, manifestation, as in Romans viii., "manifestation of the sons of God") "of Jesus Christ" (in this book to show the way in which He meets all God's desires in the midst of the wreck and ruin of the Church) "which God gave unto Him, to show unto His *servants* things which must shortly come to pass." There is a great meaning in the manifestation being especially made to the *servants*, this applying to those gathered out from the *churches*—"He that hath an ear, let him hear." There may be a difficulty in the last clause of this verse. Perhaps the meaning is, God signified by *Christ to His servant John.* The revelation of Jesus Christ in this book is of a different character to that which we get in the epistles. This goes beyond the scope of what is unfolded there.

Verse 4. Grace and peace, not from the Father, as in the epistles, but from *God* in the abstract sense—self-existence, power, and eternity being the attributes implied in the thought. "From the seven Spirits," &c., source of government in connection with the earth; "from Jesus Christ," the characteristics here named, "Faithful Witness," &c., are not those of special relationship to the *Church*, but are more His intrinsic personal distinctions and offices, and relate to

Him in the universal sphere of His dominion. John in his right place is a worshipper. "To Him who hath loved us," &c.

Verse 8. He speaks of Him; he first realizes the washing from sin, which was necessary before he could be a priest. If we do not take our right place in the first thing, we are not in our right position in the second. The prodigal son would not have made a good *servant* in the Father's house; he must get into his place as a *son*. God's ways with us are all according to the glory of His Son. "All things work together for good," therefore the *judgment* of the churches. The very highest abstract title of God is given to Christ, "Which is, and was, and which is to come;" also the title expressive of His power, "Almighty," "Alpha, and Omega"—the "Beginning and the Ending," connected with all testimony; the *Word*—first and last letters of the *word*. "First and Last" expresses that which was in existence before the "Beginning," and continues after the "Ending." It is more connected with the eternity of Christ as God. In the addresses to the churches, it is observable that those in which there is the sense of responsibility in government, the title with which He comes to them is connected with something in His person, as the "Ancient of days;" but when there is most the expression of grace, it is connected with what lies deep in His own bosom, individual dealing; *e.g.* Philadelphia.

It is needful to remember that God has given *all truth for me*. I must be holding fast what God gives, and be keeping always in my soul the conviction that I have not got all yet. Two things are very important to remember; first, *all is in Christ*, therefore I cannot get it for myself; and second, *all is in Christ*, and I am in Him, therefore all is safe for me, and God is for us. Grace and truth have

never been held together in human controversies, therefore you constantly find yourself at "Pihahiroth"—nothing but sea before you; you are conscious you cannot get out, and can do nothing.

John is surprised and alarmed at seeing Christ come to *judge* the churches (walking amongst the candlesticks). He had learned the truth of the heavenly calling of the Church, and was not prepared for this; therefore his anxiety. The *suddenness* of it was another cause. If John had had more faith and understanding of Christ's holiness, and consequently of the need to judge the churches which He had set up, he would not have been surprised or afraid. But see the condescension of Christ in meeting him just where he was. (*vv.* 17, 18.) His highest title, "First and Last," associated with human being, "He that liveth, and was dead." This condescension of Christ in all our difficulties is like oil upon the conscience. How little we realize it as we might! We humble ourselves perhaps, and pray about a thing, and then have five hundred anxious thoughts about those very things we have confessed or prayed about. Christ uses this terror of John at seeing Him on earth to express to him this moral truth connected with Himself. (*v.* 17.) When "he fell at His feet as dead," "He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death." The touch is very peculiar. One stranger does not touch another stranger; but here Christ comes, and lays His hands upon John, as much as to say, "*You lay on my bosom once.* I am the same." "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death"—all

power over hades and death. What perfect sympathy as a man associated with divine glory in this chapter! In personal experience, "I have passed through deeper waters than you, and have come up out of them," Christ would say, "and have the mastery of the unseen world—death and hades."

EPHESUS.*

REVELATION ii. 1–7.

CHRIST sympathizes with God as well as with us; therefore He judges us according to the blessing He has bestowed on us. If Christ is the High Priest to maintain our access, &c., He opens the "thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. iv.) So here Christ has done great things for this Church, and is looking for some suitable response that God can see in her. Sympathy and warning are always associated. It is because He *loves* that He comes to *search*. He must, on the very ground of love to me, search my works now. If Christ's love is perfect towards me, He desires that when I come face to face with God, He should find my works perfect before Him; that is, walking before Him according to certain traits of character. The things done are not so important before God as the formation of character. Many things He has to repress, and one object of Christ in searching and trying is to prove His own work in us to God.

A candlestick is the medium of giving light in testimony, and it always has reference to Christ. He holds it in His hand. There is no real fruit but that which is from the tree; and there is no real light but what comes from Christ the Life. Whatever was given from Christ

* This lecture, as well as one or two others, is very imperfectly reported. But though fragmentary, they have their special value, and are given to complete the series.—ED.

when here, as the Light, was always in the power of life. The light is in "earthen vessels" with us. There is no light at all in the old nature, but the new nature is the medium of testimony; Christ's nearness and Christ's upholdings are essential to testimony. Approval first, and then reproof here; man takes knowledge of works, God takes knowledge of growth as well as works. He expects us to walk with Him according to the light given. Here were works in the midst of an evil world, and in the midst of difficulty, patience, hating evil, &c., are taken knowledge of by God. There is a double meaning in coming here with praise. It is not only individual, but He is coming to see what the effect of the light is in association with Himself, and this is to be manifested to God. Trial brings out the proof of what Christ has wrought in a soul to God, and this is sometimes the reason of trial being sent. "The Lord knoweth" means, not only being cognizant, but approval. Christ has sown much, and He expects much; He loved much, and He looked for much in return for that love. "I do see a reflection of my love in their hearts, but not equal to the measure I have spent on them." "*Thou hast lost thy first love.*" This is not so much that the object was changed, not so much singleness of motive lacking as *purity of spirit* in acting. Verse 5. There is a difference between dealing with a people in flesh and in Spirit—His dealings with Israel, and here in Revelation. There it was through the outer man, *here* through the inner man. Confession is to be made, but upon a different principle. We have to separate between what is flesh and what is Spirit. Truth nourishes the inner man.

Verse 7. There is a double contrast in this promise to what man had at the beginning. First, man was shut out

from it. Second, that was the paradise of *man;* this is the paradise of *God.* We have it in Him (by faith) who has overcome. We have not got it literally yet, because in these bodies of sin and death. There is a glory proper to the last Adam. Eating of the "tree of life" has nothing to do with fixity of state, but it is having direct access to the person of Christ, in whom I now know that I have eternal life. He will be the centre of a sphere, including the heavenly and earthly. We shall be where He is, and shall have unhindered access to Him out of whom all that scene has flowed. We shall have access to (though we shall never fathom) all the divine glories and relationships between Christ and the Father—all the fields will be open to us. The chief delight of all will be in seeing how Christ is honoured. The power of victory is in going after Christ. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." Christ is the centre and power of testimony. He says, "I know and see each one of you, and I would cheer you up with the thought of what is mine to give in that scene which is preparing, which you shall have as overcomers." It is a solemn thought that God does care for testimony. "He that hath an ear, let him hear."

SMYRNA.

REVELATION ii. 8–11.

THE peculiarity of the Church of Smyrna is that it preserved its character before God. There is something very blessed in the state indicated. The end signifies that they would be able to go through death for Christ's sake; and therefore the promise is that they should not be "hurt of the second death," but have "a crown of life." The character in which Christ comes to them is remarkably blessed. There is none so high as that of the "First and the Last," because it is that which is connected with the person of the Lord. His title of Alpha and Omega is connected with testimony, the expression of the Word which was "made flesh," &c. The "Beginning and the Ending" is connected with His human character; but the "First and the Last" implies something before there was a beginning, and after there is an ending. Christ comes to this Church in this divine character, the "First and the Last," because the Church is looked at as divine. The heavenly character of the Church is another thing, contrasted with the earthly dealing with the Jews not brought out until Christ has taken His place at God's right hand. There is another thing also connected with this. The *Church* is more than heavenly, it is divine—the *mystery*, His body—and it shows forth thus what Christ has been. It is a brighter thing to be able to say, "I am a member

of His body," than to say, "I am of the heavenlies." So here Christ as the "First and the Last" connects Himself with the Church as Son of God.

The Church in the glory that is to come will have all the glories of Christ laid open to her. There will be no distinction between Christ and God,* for it is the "throne of God and the Lamb." All the glories, all the relations between them, will be open to the Church, for she is with Him there as His bride.

The earthly people who behold Jehovah in the temple will not know the Lord as Bridegroom in the heavens, which is a higher thing. The Smyrnian Church is recognized as in a position to see the blessedness of this, and thus the character in which Christ comes to them is perfectly moral and spiritual. They were brought into sorrow, humiliation, but they are in a state capable of having sympathy with the mind of Christ. Taste for truth depends upon the state of your own soul. There are some states in which the circumstances connected with Christ take most hold of the soul, and others in which the person of Christ has most attraction. The calibre of a person's soul may be known by what he most delights in of Christ. The Laodicean state of the Church is met by the promise of sitting on Christ's throne to those who overcome. Christ speaks of Himself to John as the "First and the Last," who was dead but alive; so here to Smyrna. What was comfort to John would be comfort to them. There is an answer in the person of Christ to all the circumstances. There might be many an aching heart in Smyrna breaking about the state of things; but it would be great comfort to the saints to realize, whatever

* This statement is left, but it may be questioned if it is scripturally correct.—ED.

circumstances they are in, "Christ has passed through it all before." Look at Christ's humiliation! And Paul, in all his tribulations, could always say, "Christ went lower down than this, and He could always commit Himself to God as to a 'faithful Creator.'"

There are other things in which Christ's sympathy was expressed in a different way. Christ never sinned, never had a fretful will, &c., but He tasted all the bitterness of its judgment when He bore our sins upon the cross. I must realize the cross to understand His sympathy in this. It was when He passed through death for it, and now He can say, "I am He which was dead but am alive." In coming to the church at Ephesus, the Lord was coveting *fruit* from them. It was a thing He desired to find. To Smyrna He says, "I know thy works;" and what follows? There was what God saw in them, and what Satan could see in them—"tribulation, poverty (but thou art rich)." The saint is often most spiritual when in the most humbling circumstances, and the reverse. When David was on the top of the tree, his will was breaking out; never was he so near God as in his adversity. We ought to be able to pass through prosperity without loss, being instructed, like Paul, "to be full and to be empty, to abound, to suffer need." Paul goes right through to the end of his course, and the end was lost in brightness. We should look to be able to do so too; but generally it is easier to go through the afflictions, tribulations, &c., with the soul right with God, than through prosperity.

"I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not." Here is the old tale again at Smyrna. Profession without reality—saying they are Jews when they are not so—and the effect of their wishing to get a place brings in trial for Smyrna. If a

person begins doing things for his own honour, professing it to be for God, it will be sure to end in casting off God altogether. If he begins with God, he will end with God. We have need to be jealous over ourselves, whether what we hang outside be according to the expression inside. The spiritual energy of Paul was such that what came outside was what was within, and nothing more came out than was inside. Walking with God is the only safeguard of a saved sinner. The great thing is to walk in the same Spirit as Christ walked; and He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Take God's will and suffer in it, that is the happy way. The most precious part of Paul's service was in suffering, not in doing. So also Christ's when He went to the cross. Those who are seen by no one, but suffering God's will, may be doing much more than where there is much to attract with "see here or see there."

The contrast in verse 10, is between the ten days' tribulation and the "crown of life;" the second death has no power over the overcomer. The Scripture is very much handled according to the state of mind a person is in. Some would dwell upon the "ten days." Then the Lord would have them see they are little compared with the "crown of life" at the end—"Our light affliction which is but for a moment," &c. You may have got all this tribulation, affliction, &c., and they are as a crucible. What effect has the crucible on you? If you are dwelling on the things, you will find the crucible affect you much; but if your mind is on what is beyond, you will pass easily through it. Observe, God measures things by days, months, years; there is a limitation. How many? Only "ten days." "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." What are they contrasted with? The "crown of life."

Suffering here is connected with the outshining of the life. Look at Christ; "He endured the cross, despising the shame," &c.; but what glory is like His? It is one thing to have life, and another thing to be marked there, having the crown of life. The contrast in Hebrews xii. 4, 5, is between the little afflictions of the Hebrews and the great afflictions of Christ. We think much of a little suffering; but if it cripples my fleshly energy, breaks my will, and in the glory I have a crown of life, I may rejoice in it. We must remember, too, that flesh takes hold of suffering as well as doing. If doing is the expression of self-will, it is out of place; but if God is sending it me, and I bow down to His will and suffer it, that is another thing.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." There is a curtain hanging before you in your path; come up to that, and you will see the end. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." That is in danger of being clouded by our carnal thoughts; but the sense of it is, "Do not be afraid of death; the second death cannot touch you." If your soul goes out of your body by their taking away your life, they cannot take the spirit out of your soul. "Overcomers" is the character of all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Who is he that overcometh but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ? The gospel is a gospel of life, not strivings. The character of these Smyrnese is peculiarly beautiful; they are a set of pilgrims—Nazarites cast out. They could not say, "The temple of the Lord are we." They are in affliction, and the Lord's words would flow out from Him for their comfort. We can never remember too much as regards testimony for whom the testimony is, and to whom it is;

and the thought that God is the Judge of all that is done is the great comfort. I have no doubt that we shall find, as things advance (and perhaps days of persecution may come), that the real bond of union will be willingness to do God's will independent of measures of light. Unity in the Spirit is the great power of fellowship. It is often heart-breaking to look round and see how little one can really do now; but it is our comfort to find little things owned by God; as in Zechariah, the people who took up the first thing that came to hand and did it were approved, while those who would do some great thing were turned away.

PERGAMOS.

REVELATION ii. 12–17.

As before observed, we find a remarkable harmony between the character in which Christ comes to address these churches, and the promises given to them. In the epistles of Paul we notice, that when the state of the Church is low the higher subjects cannot be introduced to them, and when they are in a higher state they do not need the lower points so especially. In the epistle to the Hebrews, who were in danger of going back to ordinances, offering bullocks, &c., all the official titles of Christ are brought out; while in the epistle to the Ephesians we have the truths connected with the Church, the helpmeet for Christ, the sharer of redemption-glory, as Eve was to share with Adam all his glory and dominion. To this Church at Pergamos Christ comes in an official character. (*v.* 12. See also chap. i. 16.) That which proceeds out of His mouth is the "sharp sword with two edges." The word is the detective power of God to deal with evil. There will be no need of the sword to cut in heaven. Now God comes into the circumstances, and makes everything bare by His word; He lets nothing pass. (Heb. iv.) This is not needed in heaven. In the passage referring to the word in Hebrews iv., Christians are apt to get hold of the lower part only; and this is likely to have a false effect, because if I think only of the sympathies of Christ as

consolation for me in my weakness it strengthens my weakness; but if I see that He sympathizes with God, is full of zeal for God, and brings God's light to me, and in view of that, shows me my wrong motives, lifts me up into God's light, coming down to me in my need, putting His hand under me to help me, I am strengthened in God's way. Christ is zealous for *God*, and so zealous for me. The word is the perfect expression of the divine mind, and Christ sympathizes with all that is new in us, not with what is of the old nature. He had to do with that on the cross, when He bore our sins; but now He bears up whatever is pure to God.

Christ comes to the Church at Pergamos as having the "sword with two edges," an implement discerning and penetrating all. It is not in days of quietness and ease that Christ's sympathy is most realized. Here were some bruised under Satan's power; but Christ could not stand by and not take knowledge of it. And He lets them know it too. Christ's sympathies are engaged for those surrounded with evil while He is in opposition to it. (*v.* 13.) "Holding fast His name" is noticed by Christ. It is communion with Christ cultivated in the midst of the sorrow. "Hold fast" means treasuring up. (*v.* 14.) This is very solemn. It is not positive sanction of the evil, but allowing it by being present, and not protesting against it.

There is a farther thing in the Church at Thyatira, where Jezebel is *teaching*. If an assembly take the position of covering over evil it is like this (*v.* 14), and it shows the want of power of life. There is a contrast between Balaam and Jezebel. Balaam was the last prophet to the Gentiles. He prophesied truth, for he could not help it; but he sold himself for a price. Jezebel took

a place amongst the people of God, and taught what she ought not to have done. Rome has no right at all to take a place over God's people; the world can have no right to triumph over the people of God. There are others in the Church of God who have a gift, and are selling themselves for a price, like Balaam. Suppose a person having a gift, and being a man of God besides, a price having drawn him aside, he is drawn out of his place by the gift; he tampers with the world and with consciences, and so gets those to whom he ministers into a place which needs to be judged by God.

Babylon signifies confusion, mingling with the world what God has given from heaven. The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes is not known, and probably we are kept in ignorance of what it is to keep the conscience alive. The churches present a state not true fully now; but there are assemblies of saints to whom in their corporate position the word may be applied: "He that hath an ear, let him hear," &c. (*v.* 17.) They were in a state here to need the sword, the use of which was to break bands as well as to strengthen and nourish that which was good.

The promise (*v.* 17) is a very blessed one, and in its harmony with the office in which Christ comes to address them. There is hidden glory connected with the "sharp sword"—the word, and here the thing promised is what is hidden from the eye of man, but gathered up to be God's delight. The manna was food given to the people in the wilderness. When it fell they said, What is it (manna)? Food unsearchable and past finding out. Christ, as manna, is food for the wilderness, not Christ in every relationship. The manna could not be kept without stinking—it bred worms when they laid it up. This may be significant of Christ, the manna for His people 6,000

years, but in the seventh thousand there will be no manna because He will be personally present to feed His people. Individually, communion now brings all in Him as the answer to our hungering in the desert, which is a very different thing to having in ourselves store—old stores put by to feed on. This is the hidden manna spoken of, that which God has. God was so pleased with His provision for His people, that He would have a memorial of it, and directed a pot of manna to be laid up before Him in the ark. God's delight in what Christ has been, as the food of His people in the wilderness, we shall know, as though God said, "I delight in what Christ has done, and you shall taste of my delight"—in the manna. God will share His delight with us. God would have us occupied with His own joy in Christ, but this is what we come so short in. "I will give him to eat of the hidden manna." Christ *Himself* will do it, just as if Aaron had taken the people to look into the ark where the manna was laid up. He has overcome and sat down, and He will give us to share with Him as overcomers.

"I will give him a white stone." This is an allusion to the ancient custom of making an election by giving the white stone. "And in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." It was the custom of monarchs, not only to give fancy names to their favourites, but names the meaning of which was only known to themselves, the explanation being only given to the one who received it. So when Christ gives a name, He knows it, and the one who receives it knows it. Christ gave names to His disciples — Cephas, a stone; and Boanerges, sons of thunder; and it would seem that the name given to the overcomer here spoken of would bring out to the remembrance of him who has it what his

character had been here. Jacob, the supplanter, would be no more called by that name, but prince with God; this new name being the expression of God's grace in his change of character. I know who this prince with God is, he is one who was tricking and deceiving all his life; but he had to learn to come to the end of himself, and then God triumphed over it all. All the Scripture names have a meaning. The name of Jesus—Saviour—how precious that name will be to us in the glory! The Saviour Jah will be ever remembered as the One who served God by letting the glory of redemption in, and served us by saving us from our sins.

The word is precious to God. We have it not only as judging, but as nourishment for His people, and not only so, but God's *own* delight in Christ. There are two precious things for us to rejoice in. First, God's all-searching eye upon us, having all circumstances purified out, so that we can stand before God in glory; and secondly, nothing is hidden from the overcomers; the ark with the manna, all open to them, and individually they are able to taste God's delight in Christ.

THYATIRA.

REVELATION ii. 18-29.

THE three first addresses end with promise. The four last with exhortations. This is doubtless significant. The three first churches have the cheering word last, and the four last have the cheering word first, and the warning afterwards. In verse 18, we have the Lord coming to Thyatira as the Son of God, who had "His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass." The glory of the Lord is the prominent feature in the character in which He comes to them. The range is peculiarly large in this address, beginning with the Son of God, and ending with His rule over the nations (*v.* 27)—the range of His government.

The hope of the Church is Christ as the "Morning Star." It is quite different to be looking to see the Morning Star, and to possess Him. The overcomer will share all with Him, and more than that, he will possess the Morning Star Himself. The character in which Christ comes to the church of Pergamos, and that to this church, is connected. The sharp sword is sometimes the "eyes of the Lord," and when separated there is something to be remarked. The sword is never in heaven, but the eyes of the Lord are.

The sword, as in Heb. iv., implies something that needs putting away when He comes down from heaven to earth It is the High Priest's work for our blessing. The "eye

of fire" have to do with the person of the Lord, and relate to intelligence belonging to Himself alone. The bride who shares His glory will be able to look round on all the heavenly and all the earthly glory, but not to understand it all. Although she is *with* Christ, He has something more than she has. Though there will be communion, there is in Him the enjoyment of something entirely beyond her. "Feet like unto fine brass;" the feet are more connected with service than the eyes—"feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," which signifies that if the heart is full of peace, the walk of such a person is marked by it. "*Fine brass.*" The brass of those days was peculiarly fresh, and bright as gold, and adapted for all kinds of uses, and signifies here a readiness for all sorts of work. People often limit Christ's service to His humiliation, but this is not true. He is serving us now, and He will hold the servants of God in the glory. He not only loosed the bands of things down here, and can say to God, "Satan put Me to death, but I have risen up over him," but He will shortly be able to say, "I have destroyed the usurper." He will take the earth into His dominion, for He has bought the globe. He has done the work of Servant in the past; He is serving us now, and He will serve in the glory. If He is in service as the High Priest, it is as anointed with oil and sprinkled with blood, ready for all service here, and He does it all in the glory of His own Person as Son of God.

If Christ planted a Church, and cared for God's glory, He must come and seek for fruit from it; and if He cared for man, He must desire them to produce fruit. Therefore He comes to see their state. People often get the thought of not liking to be judged; but it is a wrong thought. If I were a father, I should not like my child to think that I

did not care about his love, or was indifferent to his little offerings. There was nothing like the joy Christ had in serving. His delight was to do the will of His Father, and He would have us know it too.

"I know thy works, and charity," &c. Some future time we may dwell on that word "charity," which is very peculiar. It is that salt by which *goodness can flow out in spite of evil.* How little our hearts are exercised by the nice discernment of the Lord, which is so distinctive here in connection with the churches! Each word has a meaning, and how He reckons up what He can find in them!

Verse 20. The evil here is Jezebel in contrast with that in the last Church—"Balaam." In reading any history of the Church, such as Mosheim, two things strike one. First, we find persons who have no right to touch the things of God, but have done it; and second, there are those who had power, and sold it for a price, as Balaam did. It cuts an immense knot when we see this. Constantine got into the place of power on earth, and usurped power in the Church. This brought in Jezebel evil. The other is also constantly the case—persons who profess to own the Holy Ghost, and going about from place to place using their power to get a place, and lowering the truths they profess to hold. A doctor of divinity pays a price to take his place. This opens the door to all kinds of worldliness. Archbishop Leighton's heart was free from the world, and it was quite against his will to take a place in the Church; and therefore when he got into it he could preach against the world, and in the end he died at an inn. But the usual effect of taking a place in the world in connection with God's truth is "fornication," which with us is not worshipping stocks and stones, as

with the Corinthians, but tampering with the world. It is a breach of the position in which we are set, if we patronize the world while professing delight in the things of the Father and the Son; and it becomes adultery.

Verse 21: "I gave her space to repent." This seems strange to us; but so precious to Christ was the light in which Jezebel was set, that He gave her space to repent. "I will cast her into a bed." (*v.* 22.) This means laying aside—bedridden. It is important to notice that there are children who propagated what was false before God. To herself He says, "Repent," but of the children, "I will kill them with death;" and to the Church He says, "I have something against you for permitting this evil." This searching the heart is very solemn. If a man is doing evil he will not come to the light; if he is doing good he comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John iii.) But having come there is another thing. We have *God's searchings* then. Has it ever been a comfort to you that Christ searches the heart and reins? that there is not a single thing but what God sees? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it? I, the Lord," &c. The reins are the seat of intelligence, and there is not one single thing that is hidden from His eyes. If I have been looking into my heart, I have found it utterly inexplicable to myself. True, I ought not to have looked for it; for I should have known that it is inexplicable. But whatever comes out, it is the greatest comfort to know that He knew what was inside before. What comes out must have been inside first. You cannot bear God's searchings until you know that *He is love;* and you cannot bear them till you know the eternity of His love, the completeness of His love. Though He knows all that

is in me, He gives me to be the object of His service, and He gives me glory. Christ knows not only what I am, but what He was here. Can you be satisfied to be nothing? Is your heart never set on fire (because not in Christ's presence) when another is unkind to you? What He was down here was the "despised and rejected" One. No works done to Him pass without His notice. There are works ordained before the foundation of the world that we should walk in them every day, and the energy to sustain us in them is faith. If in the simplicity of my soul I look up to God and say, "What wilt thou have me to do?" I find He says, "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world;" and for this there is both present and future reward.

Christ will take knowledge of *all*. "Hold fast till I come." (*v.* 25.) I should like to speak a little on the three things connected with the encouragement to this Church. "Power over the nations," &c., is promised to the overcomers. The overcoming, as we have seen before, is believing that Jesus is the Christ.* There may, in a certain sense, be victory, having faith in Christ for life without the works being kept, but it is very sad when it is so only. See the contrast between Abraham and Lot. Abraham had the opportunity to return to the country whence he came out, but he would not return. But Lot chose the well-watered plain, clinging to a bit of straw. There is such a thing as works being burnt with fire. God would have us laden with fruit, and so stand before Him. Christ

* The reader will note this interpretation throughout; but overcoming in the sphere of the Church would seem to be rather separation from the evil indicated.—ED.

has for His reward "power over the nations," to "rule them with a rod of iron." He gives us both, but something more. When Christ wishes to show His love He makes me *something to God;* when God wishes to show His love He makes me *something to Christ.*

"Even as I have received of my Father." What He has from the Father He shares with us. Is He a King and a Priest? He has made us kings and priests. Here He takes up the two spheres over which He will reign. Consider this in connection with men's thoughts about an earthly reign. Men say, "We do not want an earthly reign." Men may have their carnal thoughts about it, but it is true that what the Father has given to Christ you will have, whether as now rejected by the world, or coming again in power and glory. Christ says, "Even as I have received of my Father." That was the precious thing to Him—receiving of the Father. Judgment and rule are part of that. The stone will fall upon the nations and break them to pieces; but those who are upon the Stone are not broken. If Lot could have realized a fortnight before that the brimstone and fire were coming down from heaven, he would not have felt about Sodom as he did. If we have right thoughts about the judgment that is coming on the world shortly, we shall not wish to be mixed up with it. It is an old saying of Rutherford's, "The rooks will not rest when a forest is doomed"—they quit the trees; so the people of God, when they see the world is going to be burnt up, will get out of it as quickly as they can.

In this promise of power there is real gospel; it was joy to Adam and Eve in Eden that God should raise up a power against the evil. The power of God coming in through redemption is the real gospel, and rejoices the heart. Our association with the power has this joy in it,

that it is power to overthrow only that which is evil. I cannot desire Satan's power. It is really a good thing that God should say, "I will not let Satan have his own way, and I will come and sweep away everything that is hostile to Me." You take care you do not go down with that. Christ is calling on us to do now what He has to do hereafter. Keep clear of all the evil. The next thing is association with Himself, and we would desire association with Him in everything. Lastly, He will sweep out all that is against Him, and cause evil to make way for the good; this is not only the destruction of evil.

"I will give him the morning star." I do not agree with some in thinking this means the position of Christ as He is now. It is not characteristic of the glory of Christ as now sitting on the Father's throne, but as leaving it, and entering the Father's house. Directly He leaves the Father's throne the language of the Bride will be, "I must go up to meet Him," and immediately we rise up with Him. The "morning star" is that which precedes the day. Looking for and possessing the "morning star" are different, just as our feeding now on Christ as the manna, and eating of the hidden manna, are two different things. You ought to be able to respond to His joy when He says, "Rise up and come away." Now the time is come for the answer of all those expectations you have had all those years, while people have been saying, "Oh, no! He will not come yet." Christ has a joy in prospect, and He says, "I will let you into my joy of coming to take you. I will give him the morning star." It is one thing to say, "Christ is rising up from the Father's throne," and another to say, "I know His joy in rising up. The wilderness is all passed, and I shall now rise to His Father's house."

This solemn word, "He that hath an ear," is addressed to individuals in the presence of that which is just about to be spued out of Christ's mouth. Its solemnity is enhanced on that account, whilst it is the challenge of love to the hearts of the faithful ones.

SARDIS.

REVELATION iii. 1-6.

THE titles under which the Lord presents Himself to this Church, in the first verse, are these: "He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." We find the Spirit of God spoken of in other places as the eyes of the Lord that run to and fro throughout the earth. These, and the expression "seven Spirits before the throne," are connected with *power* and *execution*. It is not the Spirit as the *Comforter*, but as having power to execute God's will on the earth. The "seven stars" are not power, but light. The star gives light in the night—a candle is for the darkness. God has always had a candlestick, or candlesticks (according to the circumstances), in the temple, or in His dealings in this period. A light is set up in the place it is wanted in—in the midst of darkness. There is a solemn thought here, because the "seven stars" are connected with what the candlestick is at the beginning. God chose the nation of Israel to show what a wonderful God, what a wonderful Being He was. All the nations were to see by them what God was. What did Israel do? They made a golden calf directly. Just so has each piece of light failed; priests, judges, kings, and prophets, all failed, until at last the great Light came, and in such a state were the people of Israel, that they went and asked a Gentile for leave to put Him to death, who had been shin-

ing in the midst of their darkness. Then the Lord Jesus, who was crucified, but raised up to sit at the right hand of God, must have a testimony. His heart is towards the earth, and He must have a testimony on it. This question about a candlestick does not bear upon Rome, &c., but upon what God has set up Himself. But where is it now? God has a testimony elsewhere; but that does not alter the solemn fact, that these emblems which He set up are confessedly all gone.

There is one thing very important to notice in reading all these epistles, and it is very prominent here. To be *saved,* chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and made an heir of glory, is one thing; but to bear testimony for Him in the world is another. It is quite certain that what He did before the foundation of the world *I* cannot lose in time; but my *faithfulness* or *unfaithfulness* will tell its own tale in the glory. *The* Church and *a* Church are two very distinct things. Constantine was the first who brought in the thought of the *visible* and the *invisible* Church. The Romish Church under the Pope, and the Greek Church under its patriarch, are each something standing in the world, and recognized as an instrument of government, an implement of political power. Napoleon felt he must have the patronage of religion of some kind, thus confessing that man could not be governed without religion, and therefore it was a thing to be supported. This brought in the thought of the visible and the invisible Church. The child of God has both now, though the candlesticks have failed. If a ray of light from God has shone down into my heart (and heavenly light shining from the face of Jesus Christ to a poor sinner gives him life for eternity), God says, "You are mine; mine in the place where you found this light

mine in the place where you are in the wilderness; mine in the counsels of eternity for glory and the Father's house."

One of the fallacies of the human mind, observe, is to argue thus: "I am chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world. I am born of God. I am washed, justified, and sanctified. I have everything; do not talk to me about testimony." But will that satisfy God? No. "From the day you are mine," God says, "you are associated with Me, and you cannot shake off association with Me. You are brought into company with the living God." The object put before me by Him is to live Christ; and if there is not fruit-bearing, there is sure to be some uncertainty in the soul somewhere. I never met with one but what this was the case. You may hedge up the uncertainty; but it will break out somewhere else. The jealousy of Christ's love is ever watching for some expression of His love to me, to flow out from me. A person cannot walk with God, without feeling the need of giving—rendering back to God; and therefore there must be uncertainty in a person's soul if there is not fruit-bearing. Whether there are candlesticks or not, it is quite plain you have to be a light-bearer. God holds you responsible for the light He has given you, though the candlestick is removed.

With regard to God's dealings with man from the beginning, we find man has always lost what God has given. In the garden of Eden it was found there was nothing to hope for but the Seed of the woman. Afterwards the corruption of man was so great, that God must send the deluge, and only one family was saved. Then Abraham was called out; then a kingdom was set up, and that does not stand; then it is given to the Gentiles, they

fail in their responsibility, and then Christ comes. When He comes again we find that all these things in which man failed will be taken up afresh. The paradise will be the paradise of God. The government of Israel and of the nations will be in the hands of the Lord Christ. God did put the testimony into the hands of churches—the churches failed, but that does not destroy the reponsibility of individual testimony. There is something beyond; viz., the hearing ear, and the victorious power, even faith in the Son; and just when the whole thing fails, these blessings, which have an eternal character in them, come out to light. When anything has failed, God has always showed His eternal purpose through it all. He had not done with man, and He always gathered up a remnant. There were the twelve apostles, and the one hundred and twenty witnesses for Christ. It will be for loss to a soul eternally before God if there is not faithfulness to Him.

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain." I may be wrong in making the application, but I believe this has a most emphatic bearing on what in the present day is called Protestantism. Works wanting according to the profession everywhere.

Verse 3. The spring of their blessing was hearing from Himself, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and *heard*." What a contrast is here alluded to, as to Christ's coming, with the language of the bride. (Rev. xxii.) Instead of coming as the expected One, He comes and takes them by surprise. Everything we do may be tried by the power of its amalgamating with the hope of the Lord Jesus' return. If the saint is really occupied with the thought of the Lord Jesus rising up from the Father's throne, everything we are doing will be tested by it. I am one of the espoused virgins, and I have to live as one who will be

with the heavenly Bridegroom. Whenever I can say, "I am doing this thing for the Lord," I shall not be ashamed of it. The expectation of the Lord has a certain moral character in it, because it is that which *tells of my taste of His love.* Christ's leaving the Father's throne to enter the Father's house is the great expression of His love to me; and if I really walk in the enjoyment of His love, I shall not like to be doing anything which does not tell of His love. Whatever I do will harmonize with His love. There is one difficulty people make about being ashamed. (1 John ii. 28.) They say, "How can we be ashamed when in the glory, and perfectly conformed to Him?" But how can I reconcile Christ's suffering in sympathy now with His people down here? for though we know He is past suffering, we cannot doubt the fact of His sympathy with His members in all their wilderness path.

Verse 4. Promise of white robes. Every one else may be spotted around, but I have a clean one. I have one on —having on Christ; but what is this distinctive mark? Will not all be white? Ah! but He says, "They shall walk *with Me* in white." This is the expression of perfect approval of them in the glory; it recognizes them as keeping themselves unspotted now in the wilderness. . . .

Think of the Lord Jesus pointing out to one of us, and saying, "You gave me a cup of cold water; you visited me in prison," &c. This shows the uncommon largeness of God's grace to us in not only recognizing the whole, but those special little acts of service done to Christ. In it all we trace marks of Christ's sympathy with God's divine glory and His people's blessing. "You thought that because I had given you a white robe you ought to walk clean; I will make it manifest before all." The question is not only about ourselves getting the blessing, but of

Christ's love being shown out in the expectation of His coming.

"He that overcometh." Does a person then say, "If I do not overcome, shall I not get the blessing?" I would only say to such an one, "If all you are doing is for yourself, *take care.*" If a timid person says, "I shall never be able to get it; for I am always failing," I would ask, "Do you want to meet *God's mind?* or do you want to get it for yourself?" I do not get any mark as to one who is faint-hearted, but only of one who has *faith.* I get wrong here, and fail there; but, after all, this faith in Christ will overcome; and it is not *I* who overcome either, but *He* who has sat down on the right hand of God; He has won the victory for me.

"I will not blot out His name out of the book of life." Mark, there are two books of life—the book of the living, and the book of the life of the Lamb slain, &c.; the book of the testimony,* and a book recording salvation. There are many at different times (at such a crisis, for example, as the Reformation) who have *begun* faithfully to witness for Christ, but who have gone away just at the end. There was Cranmer in England, and many in Germany and elsewhere; their names were blotted out as to the place of testimony. This applies not only in a great crisis, such as that spoken of, but at any time that testimony is going on. It does not signify how feeble the service is. That has nothing to do with testimony. Paul asked the weakest for their prayers. It is never a question of what the service is, but of faithfulness to Christ. (*v.* 5.)

Many of the promises have a moral and spiritual application now as well as future. Christ gives tokens of His favour *now* as well as in the glory, and makes it

* Some would prefer to interpret this as a book of profession.—ED.

manifest. Many persons, and godly persons too, are apt to bring down what is divine and heavenly to what is earthly. If I look to myself to bear testimony I shall certainly fail, and not bear fruit; but if I look to God to bear testimony through me that is another thing. He says, "If any man *will* do His will, he shall know of the doctrine," &c. When Christ came into the world, the effort to do God's will was the power to recognize God's ways and actings. So Luther was seeking with prayers and fastings to please God when he found in the Prayer Book the expression, "Communion of saints," which set his soul on fire, and he heard from a poor man the *pardon of sins*, which he could not forget. Into whose heart did these truths come? To the man who was ready to do God's will at whatever cost. Two things are needed—readiness to do God's will, and intelligence about the way of doing it. If a person is not bearing fruit he has not these. Sometimes there is the will; but you have to wait God's time for the light to know what to do.

Is your life formed on this: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It is a most solemn question, connected with fruit-bearing, whether you are *living to God* in the wilderness, a place which God uses for the showing forth of the grace of Christ.

PHILADELPHIA.

REVELATION iii. 7-12.

LECTURE I.

THE titles under which the Lord presents Himself to this Church are these: "He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." There is something very remarkable in the address to Philadelphia. The very name is full of blessing—*brotherly love.* Thus the Lord's condescension in calling us "brethren" down here in the wilderness is called to remembrance. The characteristic traits of the Lord Jesus brought out here, too, are very precious. The divine fulness in Christ is always the same, but the flowing out of it depends very much on the state of the people to whom it flows. We find the truth ministered to the church of Galatia is very different to that given to Ephesus. The apostle would have been straitened in himself if he had attempted to speak for God to the Galatians as he spoke to the Ephesians. The Ephesians were in a very blessed state, and ready for the highest truth connected with the Lord Jesus. It is the same difference in Philadelphia and Laodicea. He addresses the people of His love under a different title to those who are in a lukewarm state.

It is important to rest a little on the first title and insignia. Title is connected with what He is in Him-

self; insignia relate to office. There are some permanent offices, and some which pass away with the occasion for which they are used. "He that hath the sword with two edges" is an office implying something to be put down, some evil which can only be here. The eyes like unto a flame of fire are connected with His eternal office to the Church in glory; divine intelligence belonging to the Lord Jesus. "He that is holy." Let us rest on this, *perfect holiness* is connected with the Lord Jesus. We are accounted holy, as being in Him. Our abstract ideas of holiness are very imperfect, but there is another thing; viz., the word *holiness* conveys a different thought to different persons, according to what they are themselves. If I speak to a sinner by the wayside, and say, "God is holy," "Yes;" but he will say, "He is merciful too." He has no thought connected with holiness but *severity*. To a young Christian, if I speak of holiness, he will say, "How difficult it is to be holy!" An older and established saint will say, "Aye, but I have been separated to God by the truth, and I ought to keep myself separate." "Be ye holy, for I am holy." The father in Christ will see even differently to this—he will see something peculiar in God's character as to holiness, he will see what is beautiful in the essential character of God, and will be able to say, "That is just what I want."

Holiness is the essential character, not an attribute, of God. Christ says here, "He that is *holy*." When I come to God, I see in Him certain attributes—power, wisdom, intelligence, and I find those things existed in God before redemption was unfolded. At one time He is finding out knowledge of witty inventions, in creating a world; at another, by the foolishness of preaching, saving them that believe. But there is something

higher up than any of these. There are three kingdoms—*Creation*, *Providence*, and *Redemption*. God set up creation as the Creator; but there was no expression of *mercy* there. He was pleased to see creatures capable of enjoyment. There was goodness in exercise, but no mercy. In providence you see the power of God, and the wisdom of God; but if you merely look at providence for mercy, you see it limited to present things, and it is irrespective of responsibility. But God's mercy in redemption is connected with eternity. The high spring is in God, flowing down to something beneath Him. But when you get up to the divine glory, and see how it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings, you see how it was possible for One who was perfectly holy to take up such things as we are. There was nothing between the garden of Eden and the pavement of hell, as it were, if God had not brought in *mercy*. He comes and shows how He could pick up the victims, fillet the flowers of man's sin round His neck, and take up the one who is fit for nothing but a hot place in hell, and give him a place in heaven, to share all the glories of His Son. That God could have nothing to say to His Son, when in the place of the sinner, cuts the whole question of the magnitude of man's sin. That you who are shut out of Eden should be made to share all the glories of God's Son, could never have entered a created mind. In bringing in *mercy*, God re-arranged everything in heaven and in earth. The only thing that suits the sinner is *mercy*, and yet it is the last thing the sinner takes hold of. God's holiness is more shown in *mercy* than in anything, and therefore nothing is so precious to the child of God (a father in Christ

nearing his rest), as the character of God's holiness. Weigh in your minds what your thoughts of God's holiness are. It is a word that has scared many, but it is a word of blessing and power, when one really sees how it embodies that special trait in God's character—*mercy*. Christ was standing here in relation to this little militant remnant, not only as having the understanding of this character, but in the circumstances where this holy separation to God is needed; and He comes as such to associate them with Himself, sweeping out all that would not bear the light.

"He that is true." Here is another characteristic of the Lord Jesus. The two words, *faithful* and *true*, are similar; "true" means much the same as truthfulness. The truth was not embodied in any of God's manifestations to man until Christ came. A ray of light came down (*e.g.* Noah, Abraham, &c.); but we could not say that God came down then, or in the giving of the law, to call back man to the knowledge of what God required; but when God's Son came into the world, there was the full manifestation of what God was. Truth came in the person of Jesus Christ. That thought of reality when it comes into the mind is greatly connected with simplicity. It has been said of Christ, that two things were peculiar in Him—simplicity and repose. He was never hurried nor fluttered. He had one thing to do, and that was for *God*. There was perfect simplicity, because there was in Him only the expression of the one thing. For young people who may be puzzled what to follow amidst the maze of things around, the great thing is *reality;* be real, and you will be simple. There was no distortion in Christ; He was always kind to people for God's sake. Take this as a trait of Christ to follow—reality, simplicity; be real before God.

Another trait that Christ takes in coming to the little band in the wilderness to separate and strengthen them from the evil around is, "He that hath the key of David;" this is one of the insignia of office. Christ had a perfectly divine and human character, and besides that, He had a variety of offices. In David we have an allusion both to Israel and the Church. Abraham was the head of the family of faith, and David also occupied a special place. God gave to him, as to Abraham, promises too big for a man *upon earth* to have; they were heavenly and earthly. "Key" is expressive of office; it implies power to open and shut. A stranger coming into this house would not know where to find certain treasures in it that are locked up. I have the key, and can find them. Christ says, "There is no spring for Israel except from Me. It is laid up, and none can open but Myself. I do not yet set Myself to make Israel to germinate, but I *shall* do it. 'I am the root and the offspring of David.'" The allusion here is connected with the hope of the Church. It is true in the most minute things that *He* openeth, and no man shutteth, &c. *He* opened the Church by Peter; He opened the door to the Gentiles. He will open the way into the Father's house, and then to Israel afterwards. He will be the Opener to blessing, and will shut out all that is contrary. He is the *Opener* and the *Shutter*. This applies to us individually now. What I have to do is to look out to see what Christ opens to me, and to do everything He gives me to do with my might. Take everything that comes under your hand, and do it. There is not a single thing, little as well as great, but what is connected with the person of Christ. We have no need to be anxious, but calmly to leave things to Him. The con-

nection of this with the testimony is important. This testimony should be near to our hearts. If you love your Father, do you not wish His honour? Do you not wish that men should know and believe that it is their fault, and not God's, if they are not saved? Two things connected with *light* should affect our hearts. There are two parties concerned in it—*God* and *man*. In mission societies we see value for souls the one absorbing thing with them, but there was another with Christ; it was God's value for souls and desire to save them, and we never get the right desire about the blessing of any, until we see how the glory of God is connected with their salvation. The great thing to mark from what we have seen this morning is the importance of the single eye—simplicity and reality. All responsibility rests with Him who has the key of the promises, and we have need of resting quietly on Him in simple dependence.

PHILADELPHIA.

REVELATION iii. 7–12.

LECTURE II.

VERSE 8: "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." There is often great enlargement gained in the sense, through the change of a word—*none* rather than "*no man*." In the conflict of things here, even supposing we had to lay down our lives, no one, not even Satan himself, can overcome, for it is against Him who is stronger than he. We have looked before at verse 7, where Christ in His character, and in His insignia connected with office, is put before us. He is the Possessor of the key of the beloved one (David), the Opener and the Shutter, against whom none can prevail. It is to be remarked in this address to Philadelphia, that their *circumstances* are mentioned before their *character*. The slightest change even of this kind has a meaning, though we do not always light upon it for want of being more spiritual. Verse 8 really tells of the *Lord's love* to the churches. Nothing marks the low state of things more than that people often attach the thought of legality with God's looking for works. It is not so at all. The poor sinner directly he has life, will surely say, "Now I must be doing." Men in their natural state will try works, anything to save themselves, rather than having to do with a *living Christ;* but after trying all for a foundation, and finding all fail, at last the poor sinner

lights upon Christ, and then he is in danger, from the low state of things, of tossing works overboard altogether. Christ would have us rest on His finished work, but then He desires that the life He has given should appear. If you say to Christ, "I will give you no works;" He says, "You do not care for my love." If you really cared for His love you would wish to hear Him say, "I wish for this little thing and that." It is the jealousy of His love that He cannot bear that another should be in our hearts in His place.

The first thing He takes notice of in verse 8, is peculiarly sweet in a day like this: "I have set before thee an open door: for little hast thou of strength." Israel was carried, as it were, out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, they hardly knew how. When they were out in the wilderness they had an open door before them, but they could not return to Egypt. There is the same contrast in the early and latter times with the Church. There was a time when they were seen to have the power of God with them, then they came into circumstances which try what the will is for God. In addressing this Church Christ makes them know that He keeps a little door open. He sees the use they had put the "little strength" to, they had "not denied His name." See the difference between walking with God, and walking religiously before men, and without God. Am I thinking whether the things I do will get praise from men? Paul's service was not more approved than Phœbe's might be. The question for each one is, "What has the Lord given *me* to do?" Faith does not set up a thing on an ordered plan, and *faith* will not sustain a thing so set up. In this country we see much set up, but faith has not to do with that. Remark, too, that the open door to me might be quite another thing to the

open door for another. I must have a conscience towards God, and towards man, and walk with God in the path He has opened. We find constantly that God has opened one door, and we want to open another; but if God has opened one for you, and you are looking to open another, you will find Satan can shut the one you are opening for yourself. It is true for each one of us individually, in any little path of service we may have, and it is certainly true for missionaries. Christ takes notice of the "little strength." The force of the expression is, not you have a little strength (in the sense you may say to a sick person, "Now you have a little strength, only rise up and use it"), but it is, you have a *little*.

Another thing comes in, too, which Christianity has set aside so much. Little is the strength thou hast, but *thou "hast kept my word."* If God sees that in a day when His word is thought very little of, it is very precious to me; and if when His person is little honoured, it is much set upon by me, I have His signal approval. The *Word* and *Name* are together. There is a connection between the Name and the preservation of the word in purity. If a soul is seeking honey out of the word, you always find that Christ grows before the soul as of paramount importance. "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." All the heresies that have come into the world have always had their root in the abuse of the name of Christ. That by which God does everything is in connection with the name of His Son. Heresies soon crept into the Church; and after the apostles left the scene, instead of the authority, "thus saith the Lord," the thoughts of *men* were quoted. The great assault of Satan is against the person of Christ, and your safeguard is in keeping fast that name. If you are faithful to Christ He

will keep you from the error that is ready to touch your soul.

Verse 9. He shows them about the trial of their faith —"I will make them of the synagogue of Satan that say they are Jews, and are not," &c. There are often mistakes made on this subject; but, as Leighton said, "*Gold* must be tried;" and so, if God has given faith, it must be tried. If God has set this Church, there will sure to be something also set up with *pretension* only. God has set up something, and Satan imitates it. You say, "How am I to know which is of God? Ought it to trouble me, that I do not know?" If you do not know what you should follow, stand still and *wait*. God will put your heart to the test; it is not a question of intelligence, but dependence and subjection of will. Simple faith will sit down quietly and wait. If there is self-will and human energy, there will be nothing but restlessness. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." You may have to come to your wits' end—a very good place to come to —but God will not leave you without light. Christ is not responsible for the building of the synagogue, but He is responsible for His people's overcoming it. All the evil sweeps around Christ as the centre, and catches the evil that is in the man, and pushes what is for Christ nearer. What is not for Christ will be humbled and broken down; but what is for Him will be strengthened. Christ says, "I will not leave you until it is manifest who is on My side, and who is not." You often find people adopting after a time the very thoughts and expressions used by those they oppose, which is just a recognition of them. "I *will* make them of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship before thee."

Verse 10: "I also will keep thee from the hour of

temptation," &c. In connection with the testimony of the churches, the Lord passes on to show what they on the earth would have to pass through on the earth. There is a time coming to try them that dwell on the earth, but they are promised to be kept from it. There is a time of trouble coming; if you are willing to suffer trouble, you shall not go into it. If you are willing to yield to Me in everything—your heart above though your feet are on the earth, "I will keep you." There is a sweet word to those in trial, and who know there is nothing but trial before them, "Behold, I come quickly." It is very precious to see the connection between His people's delight in Him, and the promise of what joy they shall have in glory. What will be so sweet to you as to see Him? Well, He desires for you to see Him, and it will be an expression of His reward for your faithful service. "Behold, I come quickly." He will give you a chaplet of victory such as He Himself has to bestow. There are different crowns spoken of—the royal crown, which all will have, and the chaplet of victory are distinct; and there are chaplets of victory in different things—running, wrestling, fighting. A man may have a dozen crowns. That in which we have been victors will stand forth to His joy and His people's in that day. Do you think of the joy it will be to Christ to see you stand forth then? You ought to think of it. He will have perfect delight in seeing His whole Church, and in seeing each believer *perfect*. When a painter has put the last touch upon his picture, he sees it complete, and he dare not add to it; another touch would spoil it. Not only is the joy reciprocal of the Church meeting Christ, and Christ the Church, but His joy will be the greater. The one is finite, the other infinite.

Verse 12. The thought conveyed in "the pillar" is *stability*, in "the temple" *worship*. There will be no more going out; but that is not enough for Christ. He says, "I will write upon him the name of my God," &c. "I will write upon him my new name"—Christ's new name! What is in the Lord's mind here, I believe, is to contrast the thought of their little strength and *the little door* (instead of running here and there, and doing a great deal, passive suffering, and holding fast, and not letting go) with the *large sphere* He would set before them." You see the evidences of what I have; now I give it you." There is one thought which in our selfishness we forget—the largeness of the expression of Christ's love in giving to us what God has given to Him. We think of the suitability of the glory to meet all our felt wants now; but as we get on as Christians we ought to be learning more of His *love* in desiring us to share His glory. It will be seen how in Christ was the establishment of everything connected with God's counsels in glory. It is a blessed thing to be pushed by the armies of Pharaoh out of Egypt, but it is more to have the heart opened to admire what is Christ's. Not my getting a place in glory should occupy me, not something good for me (it is that), but the largeness of the expression of God's love for Christ, and His love in not being there without giving me to share it. This is connected with the gospel of peace to my soul. Christ is on the throne at God's right hand; but He is only satisfied with *that* until He comes to usher His people into the Father's house. There are two points to the blessing—the end that touches God, and the end that touches me. It is a blessed thing for me to have pardon, but it is a more blessed thing that God has joy in me.

PHILADELPHIA.

REVELATION iii. 7-12.

LECTURE III.

IN the very name of this church the Lord's love to His people is recalled, and there is something peculiarly sweet in this, in their time of difficulty and trial from the evil around.

My desire in mentioning a few things is not to bring out new truths, but old truth which God may use for the good of the sheep, as they go in and out—the manna for pilgrims passing through the wilderness.

In the beginning of this book (chap. i. 3), we find a blessing connected with reading and hearing the words of this prophecy, for the servants of the Lord Jesus. In chap. xxii. 6, the Lord's coming is connected with the responsibility of keeping what was written in the book. In verse 12, the effect of the coming of the Lord is regarded in the whole place where there is light—Christendom—but there is general responsibility which Christ will not let slip, because the Church is precious to Christ. Then, thirdly, Christ comes as the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star, upon which the Bride immediately says, "Come," and He at once responds to the affection of her heart, and says, "Surely, I come quickly." First, Christ says, "Now you have a book; I have given you a book, and I

come to see what use you have made of it." Secondly, "I have given you light; now I come to see what use you have made of that light." Then again, as part of the Bride, are you able to say, "Come" to the Lord Himself? Is it not a remarkable thing that the book closes with this peculiar brightness, which seems to shine out in the welcome the Bride is ready to give? The book of the Apocalypse is something like a clear stream from a rock, washing through all sorts of muddy, marly, dirty soil, which turns up blacker and blacker as it goes further on, but the stream itself continues pure; and it is an uncommonly bright thing at the end to find that some are calling on the Lord to come.

After the apostles left the scene the fathers were looked up to for authority, then succeeded a period of pitch-darkness; then at the Reformation, God began to separate some for Himself by acting on their consciences; at length, after that, there have been some who can say, "I belong to no churches, but to Christ in heaven, and I am waiting for Him to come for me." This, I say, is an uncommonly bright thing amidst all the mixture that has existed.

We have seen how, in the first of these addresses to the churches, the endeavour is rather to get things right again. Afterwards it is rather to keep people out of the evil which is around them. In this church of Philadelphia it (the Spirit's word) is like a knife cutting down between the good and evil that are there. (Chap. iii. 11.) "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." This is worthy of notice; first, because in this church faithfulness to the word has been praised: "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name," thus recognizing that the crown is theirs, as much as the truth put into their hands. While all the divine family are

recognized as crowned as kings, "we shall reign with Him," and so all have the insignia of royalty alike; there is something more, there is the diadem of victory. I may be an overcomer by faith in Christ, but be without a chaplet of victory. *Saved*, but works burnt up, just as Lot, dragged out of Sodom, had nothing to bring out.

There was Sampson also dictating to God where he should go with the Philistines. It is a very different thing just to know that I am saved, and to have the heart of the pilgrim, rejoicing that Christ has separated me from evil, and that I can look up into His face with joy—my *works* approved, not so much for the quantity of them—but the little things done to Him are owned as faithful service to Him in His blessed presence. After His telling them, "I know thy works," He gives them that which was to act as a stimulus to them—"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

I would recall one thing here connected with the structure of these addresses. In the first three the exhortations come before the promises, and in the last four the promise is put first, and the warning afterwards. There must certainly be a spiritual meaning in it. It is not a question of whether I can say why it is, but this is very manifest, that if I went into a person's house and exhorted first, or comforted first, you would suppose I had some reason for it. Just this we can see in relation to the churches, that the lower you go down in them, the more weakness there is in them as churches; and the more there is of weakness, the more of course will consolation be felt and valued.

Verse 12. "Him that overcometh," &c. This is said to those who are already conquerors through faith in Christ. Who is he that overcometh but he that believeth that

Jesus is the Christ? This is a most comforting word, as comforting as a bolted door to the poor weak pilgrim inside. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," &c. Two things are to be remarked in this; first, the entire cutting asunder of the Church and the world—that which marks the believer is victory over the world through faith in Christ. This is a word that meets the soul, however it may have fallen. I may have sunk down to where Solomon fell, or where Peter fell. Sampson, again, was not much like a victor; but if even like these, I can rest in that word, "He that overcometh is he that believeth."

But there is something more. A man walking with Christ is in all things more than conqueror through Him that loved him. How far are we overcomers in this sense? I could not say of myself, that the Holy Ghost sees me in every detail of daily life more than conqueror. I *desire* in everything to be a victor, first for my own sake, for there is no joy in being borne down. If I am not conqueror, I am disappointed in everything I touch. God is present at all times; but if a person does not walk with God, God must walk against him, and must break him down. Another thing why I should desire to overcome is, for God's glory. Has He sent His Son into the world to die? Has He given His Spirit to dwell in me? and am I to have no spirit becoming a son? no devotedness of heart and affection? For God's sake, then, I desire to be more than conqueror, I desire in everything to be a victor. An overcomer in Christ should be an overcomer in his walk as regards everything. The promise here given to the overcomer lets out in the details *who* Christ is. Is it said, "How do you know that Christ is the Son of God?" There are many things which I could not give as evidences to

others, but which are very sweet to myself, as showing His right, and the power attaching to Him as Son of God. Who but He could have a right to say, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? It seems to me that this must either be the expression of a maniac, or of One who has infinite power to do what He promised. So here, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, he shall go no more out," &c. He has power to make what He pleases; power to keep, and power to give away. "*I will;*" the acting of our blessed Lord in Matt. xi., where, like a nail in a sure place, in spite of all the failure around Him, He says, "Come unto Me," is similar to the words to these poor Philadelphians, waiting in patience in the midst of evil. In all this, we do not get a disquisition only of what was done more than eighteen hundred years ago, but it is addressed to our hearts for our daily experience. He is dealing it out to me by means of this little book as One who has an actual part in it. Has not the living Christ, who has been speaking amongst men, has not He spoken to me, and given me rest? May we judge ourselves in the light of that experience. Is not this Christ the same now as He was then? And is not His promise the same to me as it was to those to whom He spake then?

With Philadelphia, we see running right to the end of this string of precious pearls for His people a trait of moral glory. Christ is acting with the heart of a Brother (for He is not ashamed to call us brethren), and when He wants to express His delight in a thing, and to give His approval, He does not rest on the thing to be blessed, but brings out some of the expression of the love He has received from His Father. He says, "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God," as though He said, "God

has given me a place in the government and worship, and I shall not have it alone. I must have kings and priests with Me. I shall make you sharers with Me in it." "*My God.*" Thus He would give you something connected with Him who is most precious to Himself. What a word that is, "Pillar in the temple of my God." The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. There is not only the thought of stability in it, but it is the memorial or record of a certain victory. The overcomer is there as the trophy of Christ's conquest. Let us pause here. It is something so different to think of glory as that for which we are struggling ourselves, from having it before us as that which Christ gives. We ought to work because of what He has done for us, and because we have such a Master. There is a big bit of selfishness in us all—I, I, I—when, as regards every end or rest, it is all Christ's. Works that please Him are not ours, but Christ's. The end to have in view is not our gain, but Christ's. The rest not ours, but Christ's.

A young Christian says a great deal of "I the good," or "I the bad;" but an old Christian says nothing at all about it; but God knows altogether what I am. He has the true measure of me, and He has measured Christ against me. "He shall go no more out;" as none can open the door, and none can bring in but Himself, so none can keep it but Him. God's delight in Christ is so great that He will bring the Church into this heavenly paradise, so far beyond what Adam ever had. He could be turned out of that, but none shall go out from this.

"I will write upon him the name of my God." There is something in this like the manna that was for the people's food, and some of it put in the ark for God. There is the *communication* of the character of God upon the

child of God. Our thoughts run upon *our* being there. I shall see Christ; sit down with Him; see all that great multitude round about *Him*. But there is another thing, "I shall be like Him, for I shall see Him as He is." Then will be fully realized "grace for grace," spoken of in John. It will be perfected in us according to Cor. iii., "beholding with unveiled face." When I see Him face to face, when I stand before Him in glory, I shall have it all; it will be mine for Him to behold. Present this to the world, and they could not understand it. A poor sinner can understand the blessings of salvation; but as a Christian learns communion with Christ, he rejoices in this, that he will be like Him. Another thing connected with the blessing is, "I will write upon him the name of the city of my God." If God ever and anon formed the garden of Eden, the tabernacle in Israel, the temple of Jerusalem, in which He appeared, they were but beggarly elements to show forth that higher, better thing to be taken possession of by God. Poor sinners saved by grace, and God Himself making them His dwelling-place. Rough stones as we are, from the quarry of nature, there can be no mistake as to the origin of our being in that scene above. Nothing but redemptive love could give you and me a place there.

The heavenly city is interesting to us by way of contrast with the earthlies. If God has to do with the earth, it begins in time; if it is in blessing in the heavenlies, it begins in the counsels of God. Everything centres in Christ the eternal Son of God; all hangs upon and grows out of one root—God's delight in His Son; and redeeming love is the means of bringing it out. There is a great comfort in knowing this, and in Christ's giving us a special place in that divine glory. "I will write upon him my new name." It was the custom, as we have before spoken

of, to give a new name which others did not know. These names often had great meaning, and were connected with character. The name of "Israel" was given to that shuffling character that was always planning for himself and supplanting others, and after all was always in straits and difficulties. See him, for example, not knowing how to get over the brook Jabbok. When God had got him down to the right place, He says, "Now, if you as the creature draw from me as the Creator, I can do what I will with you, and give you the power of God." "Israel" is the new name. There are heights and depths in this new name of the Lord Jesus full of deep blessing. His person none can penetrate. One can only bow down and shelter oneself under the word, "None knoweth the Son but the Father." But as to *character*, not Person, we see how He puts it upon us, and makes us sharers of it. God displays His grace in different ways at different times. When Christ was down here in the position of the humbled One who had emptied Himself, the Servant going down step by step to the cross, He seemed without any glory in the eyes of men, and yet there was really nowhere that His name, His character, His glory shone out more than on the cross; but it was all between Himself and God then.

Then He rose up from the dead, ascended up on high, sat down, and there He is patiently waiting, the Church down here in patience too. It is in a most anomalous position for the Son of God to be on the throne of the Father, but He will not always be there. There is redemption glory to be manifested in Christ, and this new name is the redemption name to be given Him, not now, but when He who was the Servant, and in Whom always was all the power, will be manifested in glory. The time is

coming when He will lead the praise for the Church and for Israel. The new name is always in Scripture connected with character, not only of moral worth, but also of position. The Lord will take a new position altogether, and then He says He will put it upon us. There are two things peculiarly sweet to me—the unselfishness of heart this would lead us into, and then the joy of the Lord in being able to look up to His God in the thoroughly unselfish joy of His heart in having us there. Think of Him looking on all around, and looking up to God to see His joy in the many sons He has brought to glory!

"He that hath an ear, let him hear." Faith is the heart having to do with *God Himself*, and Christ gives the challenge to the heart where He has a place. It is not so much respecting *service; that* may be closing, *but the ear;* and are there not some that have an ear? I know there are some who are thankful to have not only the ears "*digged*," but "*bored*," and thankful to have such a Master.

There is one word to add in the use of these expressions to the churches. Our using them to profit depends on our rightly dividing the word of God, not taking all the promises without the warnings, nor the warnings without the promises; they are closely connected in the mouth of the Lord Jesus. What is the hope set before us? We shall not only see, but shall bear the glory; "the name of my God," the full display of the glory of God, into which we are to be ushered, as bearing that which will distinguish us from all the other spheres of glory which will exist in that day.

There is evidently a peculiar force in the word "writing." The Church is the epistle of Christ, and you ought to be able to say, that those around you have read a little bit of Christ in you (or Christ says it for you), that they have

marked that you are not like other people. But Christ is not content with that, but will have the name of His God indelibly engraven on you. You may be very little in yourself, but the glory would not be perfect without you, as the most beautiful sculpture would be marred if the smallest fragment were knocked off. When will this glory come? Will next year find us marshalled in the glory with God's name written on us? "My new name." Christ is called to patience now, to wait, and so are we; the Man of sorrows was His name then, but He will come forth as the Man of joy; this will be His new name, which will be written on His people. "If so be we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." It is the false heart of unbelief that clouds that vision of glory which God presents before our souls. It is a little while, a very little while, and only horrid unbelief of heart sends it to a distance, instead of seeing it even at the very door.

LAODICEA.

REVELATION iii. 14, &c.

THERE is one thing very helpful to remember in connection with all truth; viz., that as it comes from *God*, man, as a *creature*, is unable in himself to hold it. It is a question that often escapes from our minds, that we are powerless not only as sinners but as creatures. Not only is it impossible for God to allow a single blot in His presence, but a creature as such cannot stand before God. Any created being needs to be sustained by God. This is proved in the angels, who kept not their first estate; and in the garden of Eden, when man was seen unable to stand upon his own resources. When God was not present to hold and keep him in place, being a dependent limited thing, he fell; left to himself he had no power. It will be proved again in the millennium, when a brilliant court is set up in heaven, extending its rule over the earth, while Satan is bound in the bottomless pit; but in the end, when he is loosed, and the restraint over men on earth is withdrawn, there is the following after, and taking part with Satan. No display of God could ever keep man; His power could, but He had not laid hold of the wickedness to keep it really in.

What God keeps He hides in Christ. The saved *man* is one chosen in Christ, and therefore the only question is whether He can keep him. It is very helpful to remember

this; for it lets me down as to myself, not only as a sinner, but it also teaches that as a *creature* I am dependent. There must, then, be something above me, and if I am not instructed by that I shall get off my ground of dependence. God never meant from the beginning to give up the keeping; He always meant to be the keeper Himself. It is well to bear this in mind in looking at these churches, because it gives us to see where we are, and what the security of our heart is.

There is something solemn in the titles with which Christ introduces Himself here. "The Amen," the "verily," as if He would have them to know He was speaking with all deliberation and consideration. This spueing out of His mouth is a very serious thing, but he knew what He was doing. He is the "Faithful Witness," not only for man, but for God. The thought of *claim* is brought in here. Christ comes and claims all for God in the position in which He has placed us. In the gospel Christ not only shows what God is for us, but what He would have us to be for Himself. In speaking to the Jews, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," &c., God asserts His right over man, but Paul's gospel was far beyond that. Christ loved God's purpose about the poor sinner being saved to bring fruit to Himself from them as such. He was the faithful witness for God and for man.

The "beginning of the creation of God." If Christ was the foundation for these Laodiceans to be built upon, were they who professed to be built upon the foundation like it? In the case of Paul's building it was so; but if these were not found so, they would be tested by it and rejected. Christ never counted on anything from man. He knew there was no good in him. We see this in John xiii. xiv. Peter said, "I will lay down my life for thy

sake." Christ's answer was, "The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice."

There is much grace shining out in this address to Laodicea. People often forget that God turns things in favour of grace, instead of against it. Why has God put into man's hand this testimony of grace? Because He delighted in it. He has spent two thousand years in showing what the light is in grace. He has sent out witnesses—people to show forth what His love to man is, because He would not shut it up. Grace has been revealed, and people have had to be let down in themselves to see how unable they are to keep it. Man is brought to a dead stand in the presence of God. I see everything has been positively abused. What hope then is there for me? Well, God has not only revealed grace to man, but He is the God of grace. He has not only shown mercy, but He is the God of mercy. Adam might have said to God, "I have dropt every thing out of my hands," but then God said, "I have every thing in *My* hands." This is part of our moral education. He knew what use we should make of mercy, and yet permits us to trade with it; and when we come to the end of everything He says, "I am not ruined; look to *Me*. I have it all." So in all these different manifestations to the churches God would show us what we have in Himself.

Let us look at some of the particulars connected with this Church. Christ looks at the lukewarmness with utter disgust. Because "thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." *Moderation* is the outcry of men; every thing of respectable measure, the form of religiousness without any power. Christ hates this. He would rather have them dead, cold (He would then know what to do with them), if not burning hot. The happy

medium, as it is called, is no pleasure to Him. Men try to mix the language of Sodom with Canaan; they would have both countries, and so break down the boundary that God is most anxious to keep up. In Roman Catholic countries Protestants are obliged to have the word of God in their hands continually, and there is consequently a great deal more vitality than in countries where there is nothing to disturb the quiet easy settling down. Nothing so hinders my having a taste of grace as having a fair outside. If I then just get a place, a good reputation for myself, and God is not glorified, I have no taste of mercy in my own soul. It is better to be *broken down as a poor sinner* than to have the name and character of being a saint without the living reality.

"I know thy works," God says. In this country, and in this year, there is a general feeling of satisfaction in what men call *works;* but Christ says, "I counsel thee to buy of *me gold.*" When a person is really walking with God he can neither count possessions nor *works.* With Paul it was always *upwards* and *onwards.* When there is form without the power, people look round *themselves;* Paul looked round *Christ.*

"White raiment." These things are all the spoils of a victor; one who has conquered continually will have nothing to make him ashamed—that "the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." The eye must be upon Christ above for conquest. Christ above must be glorified.

Nothing would stand the eye of Christ, the eye of God, but what is Christ's. If there is a shred of one's own, God will mark it, and pick it out. There is an immense mass of things done—Bible distributions, missionaries, &c.; but that is bringing what is done to a human standard. How would all the machinery look in the sight of Christ rising

up from the Father's throne? What is a system without a living Christ? What was it to Paul? All the hope of the Church is formed for *His* return. Then I am a widow until He comes; and if a widow, I cannot sit as a queen, and glory in what I have. With these Laodiceans there is complacency in the labour of their own hands—*works;* but after all, if God lets in the coming of the Lord Jesus upon them, they will find all that they are doing will be spued out in that day. What is the cure for all this? A word from Christ's mouth makes people wince. They do not like it; but if the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire." Have you the gold here spoken of?—the broken heart, all the springs in God? This is to be really rich. You have all wealth in your possession, if you are nothing before God, but are trusting in His mercy.

These Laodiceans did not know Pihahiroth (not knowing what to do, but finding it a happy place to sit down to wait for God). "White raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." There is the white robe of Christ to cover over all our own deformity, and there is the vesture wrought out, the righteousnesses of saints. We should like to have not only the perfect robe to cover us, but the recognition of what He has wrought in us. We have so to walk now, as that these things may be manifested then to be approved, being formed and fashioned by God's grace working in us. Christ would wish us to be coming home laden with the fruits of righteousness wrought in us. "Eyesalve." They were no judges themselves of what was good, and they needed eyesalve. There is something in your eye that hinders your seeing, and you need to be put upon something to cleanse your eye. A Christian

may be in a perfect fog, he gets no light, and before he can get it, he has to turn towards God, and seek the glory of God. Christ presented Himself to God—"Lo I come to do thy will;" "Thy law is within my heart;" "If any man will do His will," He says, "he shall know of the doctrine."

Verse 20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Christ's patience is remarkable here. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." You must be *in Christ where all His light is upon you*, or you are *out of* Christ, where there is no light upon you. How far is it a settled thing in our hearts, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? *Not one.*" If we are to be part of the letter for Christ, it must be Christ in us—anything that is good must be put in by Him. If we have learnt to say, "Sinners, of whom I am chief," we must also learn to say, "Saints, of whom I am least." This will not be making light of failure, but will give a taste of grace.

I have to do with God who sees how I have failed in everything. I have nothing to say, and then I may count upon His rich grace to meet my need.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." Here we see the perseverance of His love. He stands knocking to those who have got in, and do not know how to get out of the ruin. Christ says, "Let me in. If, like Peter, you have cursed and sworn, you have used all My gifts for yourself more than for my glory; still, let Me in." This is a most blessed thing. The sun will not roll its twenty-four hours without God being there, if the soul is open to receive Him.

One word as to the *promises*. The mind, if less spiritual, is most attracted by the lower promises. When the soul

is in a more spiritual state it is drawn most by those connected with the *person of Christ.* There is a difference in these promises; yet this is a very blessed one as connecting one as a victor with Christ Himself. He has won the throne, and those who overcome will share the throne with Him. The rich unselfishness of who and what He is comes out most blessedly in it all. He does not bring things to be sold out, but holds forth these promises as encouragements to us while passing through the wilderness. If those poor Laodiceans could have realized what they gave up when He came to them with His *gold,* &c., knocking at their hearts, dead dogs as they were, they would find they made a sad miscalculation in being in the place they were. They were satisfied with themselves, and with what they possessed, saying, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing."

PART FOURTH.

LATER MINISTRY.

FROM 1864–1871.

Part Fourth.

LATER MINISTRY.

THE IMPORT OF MARRIAGE.

GEN. ii. 18–24; EPH. v. 22, 33.

IT is an immense sphere if one looks at the scene laid there in the garden, and, on the other hand, at that scene in which the last Adam, life-giving Spirit, will present to Himself a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

It surely is part of the special grace of God to His people, on an occasion like this, that He presents before us so distinctly what, in His mind, this relationship in which many of us stand, and in which this day our brother and sister are entering, points to; not merely to Adam at first, with Eve a help-meet for him, but to that amazing counsel of God brought out since Pentecost. Now the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam, will present a bride to Himself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

I feel the immense importance of this at the present time, because all relationships are made so little of amongst men, no natural affection. . . . Therefore on entering into any new relationship, it is very important to look to it,

whether or not we apprehend it, and stand in that measure of grace which the word of God presents to us as a privilege, to those who love the Lord in sincerity and truth.

We get the word in Genesis about the man leaving father and mother and cleaving to the wife repeated in Eph. v. 31. We have also, "As the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." Oh, what a word that is! God subjected the Church to Christ, chose her in Him before the foundation of the world; and subjected her to Christ not only for the wilderness, but for eternity, even for the paradise of God, where the Lord Jesus Christ will take her to Himself. She has nothing whatever apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has beautifully put forth what He felt as the responsible One. He has done, He does, and will do every thing. His thoughts have not changed in the least during the six thousand years of man's rebellion. He has done and won all for us; and with the same large heart that took us up, He gives us promises, declaring that the same glory which the Father gave to Him, He will give to us.

We have found Him the One whose thoughts always are characterized by, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;" and in the good pleasure of *His* will Christ became the *shelter* of the Church. That is a solemn word when one looks around the world on all the miseries of domestic life, and sees how little the husbands know how to be the shelter of the wives; how little as individual Christians we know how to walk like Christ, to say, "This must be done, because it is the will of the Father," "That must not be done, because it is not the will of the Father," and at the same time to be the *perfect shelter*. The wife should have to recognize, "This is the Father's will."

What a change it would make with wives, if we that are husbands could take that ground! If my wife sees that I am will-less, I can as to all unimportant things let her have her own way. If I am in the intelligence of Christ, I see how He connects this relationship of the human family with His own relationship to the Church; and I am sure, if I can lay aside my own will, and take up His only, I may reckon on having the constant flowing of the water of refreshment. My arm ought to be like the wing of the hen for her chickens, the place of shelter. Of course with that comes authority, but that is not burdensome. She would say, even as her husband, in all unimportant things, where the glory of the Lord is not concerned (there she would have to stand firm as a rock), "This is but a passing thing, and an opportunity of being subject."

I feel great difficulty and sorrow in looking round at all relationships—husbands, parents, and children, masters and servants, and friends; there are difficulties in them *all*, even in friendships. Who can have walked with a friend twenty years and not found it out? I cannot say that the state of them in practice is to the Lord's glory. I believe that in every case where there is anything painful and wrong, we shall find that it is in the higher member the failure comes in first; that the first to look at is the one God puts forward as being responsible. . . . The wife must not say, "Oh, but I have not a shelter in my husband!" Have you no Father in heaven? Cannot you bring His power to bear on him? Cannot you put your will aside, so as to be able to bring in the power of a higher relationship? If you can get that thought, you will be able to get strength and power to meet it all.

Child, are you not as a believer a child of God? Have you not your Father's ear? You have only to show to

your father and mother what Christ showed out towards His parents. Your parents will know and own the power if you are walking with the Lord Jesus Christ and God your Father. The same with servants. We who are masters and mistresses have a very solemn sin lying at our door for not knowing how to form in our houses *homes*, that those who are with us might feel to be places that they covet, and, when they leave, that they love to turn back to, and look to us for counsel. I ought to be one who, they knew, (be they Christians or not) had a Master in heaven, one ever a master for their blessing. If a servant complained, I would say, "Have you been to the Lord, and have you spread out all before Him? all before your Father? and have you found nothing to check complaint?" Of course there are difficulties in every relationship; but oh, to know what the setting is in which the two jewels are locked together! It is pure gold—gold not of Ophir, but of the divine antitype, Christ in heaven.

Marriage is like a finger pointing to the union of Christ and the Church; and what a poor-hearted thing he must be who, with the arm of a wife pressing on his own, has never thought of it as pointing to the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for that Church, for whom He gave Himself, and which He is to present to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

THE CONDITION OF BLESSING.

PSALMS xxxii., li.

A MAN may stand for himself, and not for God, and then he finds all God's power against him; or he may stand for God, and then God's power is with him. This you see in Psalm xxxii. But sometimes a man will choose to renounce self, and to get into God's circumstances. Then comes the question of walk, and often the same thing comes out with us as with David in Psalm li. But then we find that God is above it, turning everything to His own praise. He who stands for his own integrity, stands for himself. God saw David very differently from what David saw himself in the beginning of this Psalm xxxii. His own works and words would not do to present before God, and that was all he could do; and he did not know then how God would triumph over sin and transgression.

But God turns his thoughts outwards from David to God, and then he found he had to do with a pardoning God, who would only deal with him according to what He knew him to be. Look at it in principle, and you will see that the first state must be inferior to the second. Look at Adam in the garden. He had nothing for eternity. It is a creature's blessing for time. If I take Mary Magdalene, the poor woman who was a sinner, or a John lying on his Master's bosom, I see the eternal God there letting out His own heart. I would rather be a poor sinner loved

by Christ, and washed in His blood, than have to start again all alone in Eden, if I could. But mark, after David got into the light there is then perfect liberty. The heart by nature stands for self, and it gets nature's fare. Self is inside, and I am in perfect restraint in God's presence. Not so if I get out of what nature is into what God is, and know the fulness of His forgiveness welling forth out of His heart.

Psalm li. shows how God deals with one whom He has taken up. Now God counts flesh totally worthless, and sets it aside. We want intercourse with a living Christ in heaven. This psalm is read as though it were one of hopelessness, though there is no psalm in which there is such hope and confidence of the soul that knows its springs to be in God, in the midst of the consequences of its own utter failure. He quickly passes in review all the details of his life, and shows that his thoughts of things are the same as God's. In the spirit of perfect confidence he has not a word to say for himself. God having made Himself ours, leads us on, and is for us. This is the thing to admit, that one has sinned, that the very clay of which we are formed is bad. God can bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Who but He can? or make the crooked straight? And who can keep a man of God from falling? or if he does fall, can restore him? None but God. How in the Scriptures one finds failure come in, even at the close of the course of God's servants —Noah, Moses, Solomon, Hezekiah, Peter, Paul!

Verse 13. His eye turns on what was in God's heart; God was for bringing a people near. David finds that in all God's dealings with him He has been forming him for Himself. God brought him down to this by discipline. It is wonderful how, in dealing with His saints, God lets

nothing escape that can fit them to be acceptable to Himself. When God had dealt with David in the wilderness, David knew he was a poor worthless thing; then he had a broken and a contrite heart. Man would say he was worthless now, not so God. David had now mean thoughts of himself, and great thoughts of God. God uses circumstances down to the very failure of His saints to form, break, and smash, all that He does not like, till fit for an offering for Himself. God is nearer to us than our circumstances, and His purpose in them is quite distinct from Satan's, who will often draw a bow at a venture, if haply it may strike between the joints of the armour; and God would turn that dart aside if it were not needed to show out something He could not delight in. But God is nearer far to you than Satan who let fly the arrow. See Job, when he abhorred himself in dust and ashes; then God can come in and say, "It is all past now; I will speak of your patience. You have lost children. Well, I will give you others. I am not afraid now of showing you Who is at the back. Now that you are brought down in your own conceit, and will see in it all the power and love of God only, I can show that I was always your Blesser by blessing more richly in the end than at the beginning."

Oh, if we could see God in the thousand grits of sand that He picks up in the wilderness to break and wear us down with, we should not fret under things as we do; we should take God's side of the question. What was Solomon's greatest wisdom? Taking God's ways as the clue to what he should ask for; asking to be fit to fill the place God had put him in. "Speak, Lord, and let thy servant hear"—this should be our attitude. That is our wisdom, to have no will of our own, but to take up the mind of God. Christ had told Paul not to go up to

Jerusalem in the energy of his heart for Israel. He would go up, and there becomes a prisoner; but the very night afterwards the Lord comes in and shows Himself with him. "If my servant is a prisoner, I will be with him as such." Paul found out his own folly, and what a Master he had got. Directly he is crippled, and a prisoner, he is brought before kings and rulers, and assimilated to the life of Christ as he never was before. Peter again says that he will wear the crown of martyrdom, and Christ says that he shall win it indeed, but against his own will. The bruising is to be done with what God and Christ will. This is what sweetens every step of the way to the heart of a Christian. Are your circumstances never trying? Does your sandal never hurt? Is your girdle never too tight? Now, do you chafe against it? or do you feel content to be ground down by God, to be fit for the place God has for you? Contrite means ground down. God has taken up His people to bless them, and to make them inwardly what will fit them to be in His presence with comfort and joy.

THE RENDING OF THE VEIL.

MATTHEW xxvii.

THE thought more particularly before my mind is that which we find from verses 50 to 54. There are three things to be noticed here as immediately following the death of our Lord as of a remarkable character. The first thing is rending the veil; second, the graves opening; and third, the centurion's confession of Him, not as the Son of Abraham, but as Son of God.

I should like to look at the truth connected with rending the veil as being connected with the religion of the flesh; not only Judaism, but all of man's religion on the earth. Man had proposed a place where he could meet God. God had to hide Himself behind a curtain. In connection with man as a sinner, his thought was that he had something to do, and this thought was nourished by a system of sacrifices which God gave him to offer. When Christ was there the curtain was hanging across really. The way into the holiest was not yet made manifest.

That was one thing under the former dispensation; but there were two other things. The real character of God and of man was not yet revealed. When the Lord was there He was the perfect expression of God, but not the expression of God dealing with the sinner. But we get *that* in these two things—the cry, and the power to lay

down life, and to take it up again. The moment that was done the veil was rent, a thing unheard of before, and the Jews were troubled beyond measure. Had the veil ever been rent from top to bottom, and the holy place been laid open to common eyes? No. And this was a thing that so troubled the Jews. But then *there* came out a full revelation of the character of God, and the character of man as a sinner. Christ died upon the cross, and drank the cup of wrath. There was such a revelation of His character as God had never revealed before. He had never presented Himself as One who had found an all-sufficient sacrifice. There was the blessed One on the cross, and here might be found the expression of God's unutterable hatred against sin. The moment He has received the judgment due to our sins it comes out. God is no longer hidden, but is revealed to us just as He is in perfect light—a God of inexorable holiness, having judged the sin, and able to deal with the sinner. And, on the other hand, we have the passing away of everything belonging to the system of religion built on earth.

Where is God to be found now? In heaven. The Holy Ghost is come down; but He guides us to heaven. Do we find anything to show that man has anything to do? No. We see the throne of God, and the One who died sitting there, "the Just for the unjust," the perfect revelation of God's love. No cloud, no veil, no question about any part of His claims upon us not being answered; all is disclosed, and there is nothing to show that the creature has anything to do before getting the perfect value of this sacrifice. If our hearts have ever in faith turned to Calvary, and looked at Him, crying out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" we find that God has done the only thing that could bring us

inside the veil. His having borne our sins in His own body on the tree tells what the sin is that brought Him there, and what God's thought of it is. We never could turn round, and see Him utterly forsaken, without feeling that God has expressed there what we never should have thought of or understood.

In Hebrews x., if we take the rending of the veil as presented there, we find two things—the veil that shut in the light of God, and its being rent to let man into the light; and next, all belonging to man's religion done away with. Christ is gone up to heaven, and all that man has got to do is to come in by the way Christ has opened—by the rending of His flesh, by His dying "the Just for the unjust." It is that which gives the believer perfect peace. I have not got to do *anything*. Will God come off His own high ground? No. I have to do with Him in heaven as the One housed up there with His own Lamb. That Lamb being there, shows Him out as a God who has done for sinners what no human heart could ever have conceived. He is there perfect in His peace, and we have got to do with Him in His own peace in connection with His own Son, and that gives my soul *perfect rest*. Have you got that perfect rest? Can you say, "I have the same thought that God has about His Son"? His thoughts, of course, are much larger, but they are the same, because they are in connection with the work His Son did when He cried out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," and with His being gone up to the right hand of God. Can you say, "I understand what God's glory is"? I never could have known it if He had not revealed it; and this is what He has revealed—that the throne of the eternal Father has become the throne where the Nazarene is sitting, the One who died "the Just for the unjust." I can turn to that

Christ, and say, "Nothing can disturb me. That glorified Christ in God's presence is the very ground of my peace."

How did Christ get to this throne? Through death. If He had not died, He might have been there alone, but never in any connection whatever with poor sinners. He did *die*, and there the glory of God shines forth. Directly Christ died, it came out that human religion will not do; the veil of the temple is rent from top to bottom, and then in connection with the same death all the religion of human nature is stripped off entirely. This temple even will not do.

Next, see the triumphant power of Him who died over him who had the power of death. Some tremble at the thought of death; for not only is death the wages of sin, but a prison-house where the wages are to be paid. But it is not so with a simple-hearted Christian. He says, "If you talk to me about death, I will talk to you about *Christ's* death." It was the counsels of God, that through His death He should nullify and bring to nothing that which had power to make me tremble. Did Paul tremble when he was balancing in his mind whether he should stay, or go to be present with the Lord? The power of death over him was destroyed because Christ had died. The rending of the veil was a most remarkable seal put on the death of Christ. God said by it, "The only way of approach into the holiest is the death of my Son." The veil is rent; all expression of hindrance split from top to bottom.

When Christ gave up the ghost the earth quaked. There was nothing to be surprised at that creation's Lord dying on the cross should cause the foundations of the earth to shake. But the *graves* were opened; death is swallowed up in victory. "O grave, where is thy victory?"

The power of Satan is expressed in death and the grave; but now the prison-house is opened. The grave has lost its power of retaining the prisoner; and not only that, but many saints arose, and appeared unto many. But they did not arise until He, that Master of death, had again taken His life. There was the complete manifestation of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, not only over Satan, but also in bearing the judgment of God about sin. When the Lord Jesus was in the world His power over death was displayed. He could raise Lazarus and others. It was the power of Christ as Prince of life. If I say, "I believe in the resurrection from the dead," there is power given me to believe in some *One* who is the Resurrection and the Life. This doctrine points to a glory in Christ quite beyond all other glory. I know that I shall rise because He rose. There is the expression of my fellowship with Christ. Why did the bodies of these saints come forth? Because God would not separate His people from Him in resurrection. His own people should first be raised up in blessing. He would not have it hidden that He was raised from the dead. "Ah, Satan, you can do nothing! You cannot keep the prisoners. The prison door bursts open, and they escape." Satan can do nothing on the other side. God has identified me with Christ. Because He rose I shall rise. We may look at these as first-fruits —fruit in a peculiar sense, as the expression of God's delight in Him. Looking at these bodies of the saints, we may look at their rising as a stamp put by God on the resurrection of His Son. He would not let Him come up from the grave alone.

The third thing is the remarkable confession of the centurion. We get the faith of several Gentiles shining out with peculiar beauty to refresh the Lord's heart. One

said, "Speak the word only"—a faith so simple, a faith that went right home to a certain glory of Christ's; and it draws forth from Him, not only answering power put forth, but an expression of wonder. He did not find many Jews with such faith. So here the faith of the centurion lays hold of Christ, and his confession comes forth, "Truly this is the Son of God."

There is no knowing God save as He is revealed in Christ. Christ is in heaven. We have not got to look where to find Him. There must be a great stripping of self before we get enjoyment; but a person cannot now say, "What have I got to do before I come to Christ?" When he *has come*, there will be a great deal to get rid of not in accord with Christ in heaven. But that has nothing to do with what he has in the death of Christ. Do you recognize Christ as the accepted sacrifice? Do you take the death of Christ as the measure of what God sees the sin in your heart to be? If you did there would be a ceasing from self, and victory over everything. "If God be for us, who can be against us"? If I have got Christ in heaven, to what point of blessing is He hindered from moving me? I am in connection with Himself as the Man of sorrows, with Himself who went down to the grave, with Himself risen alive for evermore at the right hand of God. There we find in Christ so presented our place before God. God has put a stamp on the death of His Son; He died, He is risen and ascended, and I know Him as the One who bore my sins on the cross, as the One who revealed the glory of God to me. We know Him, and have confessed in the light that He is the Son of God.

CHRIST GIVING SIGHT TO THE BLIND.

JOHN ix. x.

IN chap. viii. we get the development of part of the truth of Christ referred to in chap. i., as the One who is the Light of the world, because in Him was life. In chap. ix. we get another thing connected with the same truth. Now He is the One who not only has eternal life and is light, but who also has the power of communicating sight. There is a close connection between the blessing of sight and the enjoyment of light, and both flow from Christ. He is Light; but there cannot be enjoyment of it except in possession of sight. In His dealings with this man He showed it in a very simple way. In chap. x. He takes up what the question of light is, not in the enjoyment of a poor groping thing, but He knows what the blessing of possessing sight is. He knows the Father's plans, and how all is found in Him.

Verse 2: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" This question is so like the mind of man. Christ says, "I do not take it up in that light." He takes up God's side, showing that sorrow and privation are connected in God's mind with some work of power not yet brought out. It was as it were a spot in providence that this man was born blind. Christ says, "I am come into the scene where everything is out of course, to gladden hearts, and display the glory of God."

"Siloam" (sent). There is an immense deal of instruction in this. The whole virtue of the cure lay in this, that the blind man took the Lord's word. If he had not gone, would he have been healed? No. Why? The same God who had power to cure had a right to dictate how it was to be done, and he obeyed the word. It was not the clay that cured his eyes—a strange thing to cure a man's eyes by filling them with dust. The working of faith is a very simple thing; it obeys the word of God *because* it is His word, and owns God in the immutability of His truth.

A man born blind and now seeing! It is no wonder that at first he was occupied about what was done to him. The people help him on; they come and question him. He owns it: "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight." (*v.* 11.) They could not let the matter rest. There was something in those who were blind of heart that made them unable to leave alone a man dealt with by the Saviour. Then came the great offence—"it was the sabbath-day"—Christ's expressing His idea of God's rest by removing sin and this blindness, a result of sin.

Verse 15. Remark the progress in the man's mind. When a person is being led on by God it is wonderful how even his adversaries help him. Now it is "He is a prophet"—God's mouthpiece—not merely "a certain man called Jesus." (*v.* 17.) The parents are called. They did not say, "How blessed for us to be cast out of the synagogue for being the father and mother of a blind man healed by Christ." They shirked everything like the recognition of the power of God working. Then again the

Jews called the man, and questioned him. They did not see who was leading him on. They tried to puzzle him; but, as with Christ Himself, when they tried to catch Him with questions, He went on calmly. (*v.* 29.) Now says the poor man, "Here is a wonder of wonders! You clever doctors of the day, and you cannot tell who this is that has opened my eyes!" and he takes the place of a teacher among them. A poor stupid man, only fit to be cast out of the synagogue, yet giving a testimony to God in His character. Then they excommunicate him. Directly the links are cut between him and these Jews, what follows? He who had been drawing him on, He who had given him sight, and had watched and guided everything for him, now meets him, and says, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Cast out of the synagogue, cut off from all outward connection with God (though all was in ruin), Christ puts Himself simply before him. His heart is ready for anything. "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him." There is the Christ giving power of sight to the eye of a man, but at the same time dealing with the soul, so that that man got into the position of calling him "Jesus," then a "prophet," and then owns Him as the Son of God, and falls down before Him and worships. He had got the power of seeing spiritually the Son of God, who was Light because He was Life—not only the One who as the Light diffused the character of God in the whole world, but the One who gave sight to the blind, to enable an individual to say, "Now I see everything in connection with Thee. Thou art the centre of all, and I have got my joy in it."

In chapter x., we get brought out what sort of person

the Christ was who, after speaking of Himself as the "light of the world" in chap. viii., tried them again, not only by His word, but by His works. He had taken up the blind man to show out the character of God, who was not only a shelter to the poor woman, but whose goodness could underlie affliction, and bring out His power in it. It is often the crippled child that God first picks up and makes the channel of blessing to a family.

Do you think this poor man would ever regret having been born blind? Were you to meet him in eternity, and to say to him, "Are you the man that was born blind that Christ might be magnified? and kept blind all those many years because Christ needed you just then and there, as something He could take up as a sign of His readiness to bless by His works, when they would not have His word?" Would you find he regretted it? What a blessed thing, in the midst of sin, and the bitter fruits of sin, to know One triumphant above all—able to pick up things that look only dark in nature's eye, and turn them into glory and joy!

Chapter x. 2, 3. Has Christ a people on earth now? And do they know His voice? Are you conscious of Christ's voice speaking about you, speaking to you? If you are, it is because He has given you eyes to see, and ears to hear. "They know His voice," &c. There is something peculiarly attractive in this to one who knows the power of a voice. What is a mother's voice in a time of distress in her nursery? It is safety and rest to the hearts of her children, even apart from what she says; so with the voice of Christ.

Verse 14. What a place for Christ to take as to His poor disciples, as to you and me! Is there One on the *throne* of God that has *such* thoughts about you and

me? Does Christ know me? and do I know Christ? Thoughts exceedingly gracious in character drop here from His lips.

Verse 17. It is not in the fruits of Christ's death *for us* where the commencement of blessing is. Where is the commencement? There was a certain intercourse between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world. The Son received from the Father a commandment to do a particular work for a particular purpose, and—strange as the work was for Him who knew no sin to be made sin, for the Prince of Life to go down to death—He perfectly fulfilled His Father's will. Believers do not see enough the difference between the basis of their blessings and the blessings themselves. The basis is that there is one God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that God was pleased to make a display of His redeeming love, and the Son came forth to display it, and to vindicate God as regards the question of sin. This is something entirely out of self—there I rest. There, in connection with divine glory in the heaven of heavens—*there* is the foundation of blessing.

How sweetly must all this have fallen on the ear of the poor blind man. How beautiful to see Jesus as the Advocate of the poor sinner. So here; not merely did Christ vindicate God and display His own ways, but there to a poor blind man, utterly rejected by all. I will let him hear that I have a Father; he has come out after Me — men have cast him out; what are My thoughts about him? "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." How sweetly it must have sounded on his ear! He might well say, "Is this my portion? Is this what He sees in the light in which He is? I have lost my father and my mother; I am

cast out; but He talks of my having eternal life, of none plucking me out of His hand; this is something blessed indeed!"

Verse 29. It is not merely the glory of the Son, but we also get every blessing in connection with the Father and the Son. I may be a poor specimen of a Christian; but if the Father gave me to Him, is not He to love me? If I am not the fruit-bearer I would desire to be, yet if every glance of Christ's eye is on me, saying, "There is one the Father gave Me," is my poverty to change one thought the Son has about the Father's love? The deeper the poverty, the deeper the ruin, the more shines out the Father's confidence in the One who cannot possibly fail Him. The Father of this only-begotten Son selected Him as the One into whose hand He put all, foreseeing all the world and Satan could do, and the Son took it as an expression of the Father's love to Himself; and what are the Son's thoughts about those given to Him? The Lord Jesus Christ thinks of them as given to Him of His Father. It is impossible for Christ to draw motives from below Himself. He must, because He is God, draw His motives from God. He cannot say, "I forget My Father, I forget Myself, and think about your feelings." He begins with His Father, and then He says, "You have not got the least thing—a pain or ache, the tiniest thing, but I have got it all in *My* heart, and My hand is under you in the little as well as the big things." But while in His sympathy He enters into every little thing—and oh, they are very little!—He does it from first to last as God. He says, "You are keeping this trouble from Me. I cannot let you keep it from Me. I *must* share your sorrows, and you must share My joys. I *must* sympathize with you, and you must sympathize with Me." And the

poor man heard all this. The end of it is fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Fellowship is to stand and hear Him talk about the Father, how He has used Him, and how He has done everything according to His will. Have you got eyes to see the Lord? And if so, are you hearing His voice? It was strange language to the poor man, except when Christ spoke; it was trouble everywhere, except with Christ. He went straight forward; his ear was opened to hear all these blessed, precious things about the Father and the Son, and about all the offices put upon Him as One who had sheep on the earth, and the way He identifies Himself with these sheep.

Are *you* seeking to live that out? seeking *now* to live out the life that is hid with Christ in God—a life fed in you by the thought in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ up there, altogether above this scene? Your feet may tread a dark valley, where there are all sorts of roughnesses, and much you cannot understand; but your life may be an expression of present hearing by faith the words of the Lord Jesus in glory to His Father about you. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Nothing short of that will do. The days are critical, and the question will be pressed more and more, Who are living to Christ, and who are not? If I say, "He has loved me, and I must live to Him," I shall not be caught in the storm.

A FRAGMENT.

JOHN xii. xiii. xiv. are remarkably connected together, as bringing out the work of Christ in the eternal redemption of a people to be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. The Jews had tried to put Lazarus to death, not liking to have such a witness of the presence among them of One who could raise the dead. God puts it into the hearts of the people to prepare Him an ovation, to give Him a triumph; and then certain Greeks (not Hellenistic Jews, but Gentiles) come up to the feast, and, without knowing what they were about, wished to see Jesus. But the Lord knew what it meant; *i.e.* that He was to step forth into His new work of gathering a people to God. He knew it was time for Him to die. The eternal Son of God had come off the throne eternal to die, and to die on the cross, and by whose desire? Was it coveted by man? desired by His disciples? No; anything but the cross of Christ is what man would think of. Satan, the prince of this world, could make those hearts which had cried, "Hosanna," say, "Away with Him, let Him be crucified!" And though Christ had spent Himself on earth for man, man would rather bury his dead out of his sight than have Christ as the Resurrection and the Life.

"Now is the judgment of this world." What does that mean? The water of the deluge had once destroyed the earth, fire will destroy the heavens and earth that now are. There was no flash of lightning, nothing destructive when Christ died, yet a thorough manifestation of what the

world was came out then. Its judgment was proved, though not executed. The world exposed what it was itself by putting the Lord out of the world. "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Satan was a covert enemy before the Lord came into the world, not open as now. The power of Satan was broken. As was seen at the day of Pentecost, he could do nothing against the Holy Ghost. "I will draw all men unto Me." A strange, foolish thought to nature; but according to the perfection of Him who is the wisdom of God to know that nothing would draw the heart of poor sinners, save the Son of God hanging on a cross, the expression of man's hatred, but of God's grace.

Did you ever taste for yourself that the Son of God in heaven can look down upon you, and make you taste the marvellous love of His heart, entering into all your discipline down here in this wilderness, occupied with your weakness, and coming in to wash and cleanse your conscience?

Chapter xiv. Who would have thought of what we find here, that His love would lead Him to come out again to fetch us home? Who has thought of it since? rather, who thinks of it now? Oh, how little our hearts, the best of them, live in the thought that our future (Christ's to-morrow) is the Father's house! "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." He would have no confidence in Peter; but Peter might confide in Him, as though He said to him, "You want keeping as well as saving. I can meet all you want in spite of yourself." It is superstition to speak of angels taking the souls of saints into heaven. Angels dare not intrude on work that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. If a Stephen is to die, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself receives his spirit. All about the soul and its salvation is in the hand of the Lord Himself.

WHAT CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO BE.

Acts iv.

We are called to be the manifestation of God's delight in the Son of His love. We are in union with Him to-day where He is in heaven; and if this is to be practically the case, everything in us must come directly into judgment.

If I took a child of five years old, and could fill its little heart with that thought, it would feel it must not say, "I will," and "I will not." God made nothing whatever of Peter's will, or of Paul's will. If the Lord had put the key into Peter's hand, he must go and open the door to the Gentiles, whatever his Jewish will might say; and when Paul forgot that implicit obedience to the Lord's will was his place, and would go to Jerusalem, he became a prisoner, and thus was carried to Rome. If you say, "I will," you are not the expression of the Father's delight in the Lord Jesus Christ. How far does this come home like a hook laying hold of each of you? If self-will is not according to Christ up there, have I not to judge myself? The Lord does not put us two or three together to hide our individual walk. How little a time are we together compared with what we are in solitude with the Lord! I have individually to do with Christ. He loved me, gave Himself for me. Will is the grand contrast between Christ and us. The great mark of anti-

christ is, that he will do his own will. This principle goes into everything. Whenever taste comes in, will comes in—"I should like." This is will.

We have two marks of the early Christians here, which should come as a probe into our Christian circumstances, and into our hearts. Mark how near God these people were. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and the place was shaken. Where is there a company like that now—a company that can, so to speak, command the expression of the delight of God the Father; a company whose prayers are heard, and who ask the very thing that God delights to give, and to give at once? There are individuals who pray, and get answers; but where is the company who have the ear of God? Then mark the devoted and pilgrim character of these early Christians. To a Jew, giving up his possessions was an immense thing. It was saying plainly that his springs were above. How little of that beautiful character of unselfish devotedness comes out to light now! I do believe that the eye of God which looks down on us has still on it the tracings of what came out on the day of Pentecost. God looked on a risen and ascended Christ in heaven, and gave the Holy Ghost, with the light of the glory of God beaming on His face. He looks down now on us with all that carried in His eye. I would not admit that the apostle Paul or Peter had a single blessing that I have not; they had nothing that was not in Christ, and I have all that is in Him. We have the same Christ; but is there the same character stamped upon us? Are we as pilgrims and strangers in whom God is showing forth the pleasure He takes in the Son of His love?

THE POWER OF NAZARITESHIP.

LUKE ii. 49.

"WIST ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Which of us would have said these words when we were twelve years old? His ways had been such, that He would appeal to them as though they ought to have known from the tenor of His life what He was occupied with. Phil. iii. shows how a man of like passions with ourselves may tread the same path, seeing and estimating the beauty of Christ. The effect was, first, that he counted all else dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; and secondly, having the death of the Lord as his substitute, and the resurrection of Christ as his righteousness, he found that every thing was against him. His position like that of Christ Himself, he could say, "Father." As a child his thought becomes, "I want to be like Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings." He had no bag with holes, like Judas, into which he could put the things of earth. They were but dung, and the whole world to him was a place savouring of the murder of Christ, and it produced in him a sort of nauseous disgust of the things in it.

The power of Nazariteship comes from the knowledge of association with Christ. Being crucified with Him, and raised up together with Him, I would like to walk as He did in this world, to have the life He had when raised

from the dead manifested in my ways. How few have this as their aim and object! How few seek to track out Christ! What will produce it? If you and I could say, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" we should soon find ourselves in the fellowship of His sufferings. If I am a son, the Father has His business still to be done down here. Does it enter into our souls, sitting round the table, when we commemorate the death of our Lord, that our Father has business to be done? By His Spirit we can find out what part of that business He puts on us, and let us do that, letting self and the world clean go. The extent to which the simple faith of that truth would bring our hearts into treading the same path as Christ trod, and give power to be occupied with the Father's business, is greater than we know. Christ has brought me, put me in the right place—I in one, you in another, where there is suffering or no suffering, but as He likes, and where there is His Father's business to be done. Standing in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, conscious that His Father is our Father, His God our God, and that we have the Spirit of that blessed One at the right hand of God, the purpose of our hearts must be to mind the Father's business. Have you purpose of heart? What is purpose of heart? The needle quivers restlessly till it has turned to the north; there is purpose there. "Whose service is perfect freedom" should be our word. What am I doing? Minding the Father's business, for one thing. What is my confidence as to what lies before me? What would it be if I sought but the Father's will, if I had confidence in His wisdom, and desired nothing but His will? How could I fear if I had no business but the Father's will!

SONS OF GOD.

JOHN xiii. 36–38, xiv. 1–11.

IT is a thing of great importance, beloved friends, to remember, and to have fresh upon the mind continually, that our God has said that our ways are not His ways, nor our thoughts His thoughts. It prepares the soul to receive what He may present to it. It enables the soul quietly to lay aside all its own reasonings. Man is antagonistic to thoughts in which God is first. Man refuses to believe that God is a reconciler. That pre-eminence He has in having been *first*, comes out in a way that sets man at utter defiance. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Man is lost *there*.

There is another point in which I see that more strongly still, not in the position of a son being secured to me, but in giving privilege consequent upon that. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." God has chosen according to His own character, His own ways, to do the thing. I have to be taught the A, B, C, by God, and to be simply a receiver, upon the Scripture ground, that it is the Son of God communicating His secret thoughts. I am brought into the relationship in which I am to call His Abba *my* Abba; and the very abode which by right and title belongs to Him, is the very place to which He *is*

guiding me, and to which I shall shortly be brought. John shows me this. It is entirely new ground; it is not creature-ground. This ground I could not be set upon, if He could not quicken me with the eternal life which He had with the Father before the world was. We are in the relationship that involves all the rest, and the burden and right of all things are in Himself.

See chap. xiii. He just sets Himself as recognizing that the door had closed on Israel. He knew that His hour was come. The great point brought out here (*v.* 3) is His consciousness of being the object of the counsels of the Father. Every action is perfect. No one could have taken His life away. He "came out from God, and He went to God." He set Himself to bring out truth connected with this doctrine. First, we get the cleansing; then the coming to light of a traitor present. He knew it, but there was no check in the flow of His love, the purpose of His heart. There was weakness, too, on the part of the disciples. John was easily influenced, though he lay on the bosom. Peter was uncommonly full of himself, full of thought of his competency to stand on Jewish ground. The Lord brings a little picture of all that was in man, as known to Himself, when He was about to bring out these thoughts of the Father's love—this relationship of sons with Abba.

He brings out the most complete sentence on Peter, and put the flesh entirely aside: "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" No wonder, He was offering Himself; He was about to suffer. He had that upon His soul at the time, and Peter puts in, "Well, I am the man that will lay down my life for you." He cannot but express incredulity. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice;" then

istantly He goes on, "Let not your heart be troubled." What He had in His bosom at that time, with regard to Peter and John and the rest, could not be repressed, could not be stopped by the rude interruption of a man, saying, "I will lay down my life for you." The man did not know what he was about; *the Lord* understood it all. The state of Peter's soul could not take these thoughts in. Peter did not like such thoughts. But the Lord goes on, "Let not your heart be troubled. Everything is failing here; the kingdom going, Israel is denying its Messiah, but you are associated in my heart with the Father, and that is the ground on which I am acting."

I find all His thoughts tend towards this—He was going to give them the stamp of sonship. He could pass on to that which was included in the love: we are to be in the house of the Father. Which of these two things is greater? Surely the first, if I can say the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is our Father. The gyves and fetters of Egypt may be off my hands; I may be weary and foot-sore, going through the land, but the assurance of Abba's love is keeping my soul above all circumstances. We shall get into circumstances when we get into the Father's house! Now, what was He about to do? If He had listened to them, to Peter, He would have taken another line. He had got His clue from fellowship with the Father's counsels. He saw the whole way from the beginning to the end. "Everything has failed in man, but I do not fail. I shall have a place given Me. I shall not fail you in the least, however long it may be before I shall certainly come and bring you home at the appointed time." There was something much nearer to His heart than the A, B, C, He had to teach them.

I think, beloved, the remark would be well, that we

gather up the blessing, the external privileges of sons, and do not rest sufficiently upon the grand thing which is presented here—that this Person come into the world is *Himself* the revelation of the Father. I do not speak of that merely which was unsearchable, God manifested in flesh. "Whither I go ye know, and *the way* ye know." He was here in a simple, quiet way, leading them upon the ground that led them to express their ignorance. His conduct here is just the illustration of His fellowship with the Father, and His competency of apprehending the Father's mind. He *knew* the Father. Talking to the poor woman at the well of Sychar, He could bring *that* home to her heart. "How can we know the way?" He just gave His own self as the answer: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have *seen Him.*" (*vv.* 6, 7.) I believe, to own our shame, we very often read that down, and think very little about *Him.* It is not, as in Peter, "born again," but "You who have followed Me, who know the sort of Person I am, who have seen My ways, who have heard My voice, who have witnessed My character—now every thing I want to teach you about the Father is presented in Me." It is like a child learning the character of its father, perhaps in the little things of the nursery or the schoolroom. When it is put into other circumstances it has got its heart formed, its affections trained. If you brought before it something different the child would not admit it. "No, *that is not my father;* I know my father well." Now the Lord had been with them in all the Jewish circumstances. "I want to bring my Father before you. Now, do you know Me?" Oh, I do believe the children of God at the present time

have a little word to look at in connection with themselves—whether or not they have taken the character presented by the blessed Lord as the true expression of the Father. What a complete purpose of His heart to vindicate the Father's marvellous grace! Whenever we come to know Abba, we are to think of *Him*, the perfect Son of the Father, walking among them, caring for them, keeping this ever before His mind, the revealing of the Father to their hearts.

Well, they did not understand, and they gave Him another occasion. "Hast thou not known Me, Philip?" (*vv.* 9–11.) I should suppose the "works" here are His *whole* bearing. "Whatever you see Me do, that is of the Father. What knowledge have you of *Me?*" He showed it at the time of His own humiliation. He came upon the ground on which Israel was to show the fulness of the perfection that was in Him. He turned to wipe away the tears from the eyes of the widow. He turned to feed the multitude; He ever kept His eye on the glory of God. The whole question of sin has been settled by Him, and God has "sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Has that led you into the truth of what it is to be—"a son"? "In My Father's house are many mansions." The blessed One gone there is just the One through whom that truth is out, and He tells of all that love of Abba, this purpose of Abba. God shows me Him in the highest glory, and tells me that my place is with Him there.

It is important to keep separate the fruits of the relationship, and the security of the relationship. The grand doctrine of sonship now is, that the only-begotten Son is upon the throne, seated there as *Man*, the rock that was smitten; and God has sent forth the Spirit of His

Son into our hearts. This love is set upon me in this Christ. I may walk carelessly, and get into sorrow because of it; but the relationship never varies. Well, how far does that fulness, that circle of love which goes forth because of the Father's delight in that only-begotten Son, *engross* my heart? I am a son of God, and I have nothing to do with any world, or any place, that does not know these sons of God. Has He put me into the place of knowing Abba by the light that shone upon the Son in humiliation? Can I, beloved friends, take a place before you, and say, "If you look at my life closely enough you will see that I am carrying out that"? Can you say, "Well, I know I am a son, and I have taken the place *distinctly?*" I ask you individually, Do you take that place? You will find it will not do to have any neutral ground. You cannot stand upon earth and water. All the tide flowing in will not sweep away what is thus secured by the Lord Jesus Christ. You will find, if you take the place of a son, that it cuts off a thousand things that you would do comfortably with if you were only trying to be a good man here. If you try to carry out His mind, you must remember He had no mind but the mind of a Son of God down here. Independently of Him, we could not say to His Father what He could say directly to His Father. It is made good to us in Himself. He is the Son of God, Heir of God; we are sons, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ.

It is exceedingly important to bring in the place with the privilege. It detects the character of what we are carrying with us as we go along. What burden am I carrying with me now? Is it anything that will amalgamate with the inheritance? that will be a pleasant retrospect from the glory? Shall I look back, and say,

"Well, there I was toiling and labouring. It was what came upon *Him*, the same in character. I *did* suffer with Him there, and now I am singing with Him here. How pleasant it looks from the Father's house!" Or else, "Alas! He had to drag me up through the dying embers, like Lot in Sodom; but there is my whole course all gone. It vexed me as I went along. I am positively angry when I think of myself as I passed through the world."

To-day you have been acting as a son or daughter, or you have not. He had objects that He loved. His heart was bearing in gentle patience all their stupidity. But there was not a single thing in connection with the course of the Lord that was not of the Father. No one could put a finger on anything in that course and say, "There was a bit of His worldliness." Now it is a time of complete separation. If you get back to the gospels, it was a time when all was going to the sieve. Scribes and Pharisees and Herodians were there. There was but one spiritual mind in the whole scene, and that *One* was the touchstone of everything. The separation took place, and other ground was found for placing what He counted dear upon. Much more will a spiritual mind feel at the present time that the crisis has come, and that there is no longer any time for shilly-shallying or vacillation. Everything is called into question at the present moment. All the influences of the world are active, and the power of Satan is at work, driving the vortex round and round, and people do not know where they are drifting to.

Can you say, "I am a son of God! I have the Father's heart open to me"? The one thing on which *the Son* knows my mind is set, is carrying out His mind down here. Well, He says, "They will feel my mind some way or other;" "smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall

be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones."

Whatever the state of things, the Father will turn His hand upon "the little ones." They must walk now in the comfort of it, if they are to find it in that day. Are you a son of God? Does He look down upon you with all the affection of that heart bearing upon you as a son? Yes, blessed be God! Are your steps down here, are the marks of your feet as you go along through this scene, beloved, are they the steppings of the Father's children? The relationship is all secured, but am I walking as a son? Are you individually walking in such a way that the Father's heart can find its satisfaction in you? that the Son of God can look down upon you as those to whom the looking to Him for guidance is habitual? Beloved, it is practice, it is the carrying out of God's mind in all the detail of your path down here.

PAUL AS A PATTERN.

ACTS xxvi. ; 1 TIMOTHY i.

THE apostle Paul is the pattern of all who are called and converted now, though they may not come up to the pattern. All the feebleness of Christian life is traceable to want of perfectness of foundation; it is not according to the pattern. A great many saints who are wishing to get on, and do not, would find out why, if they would compare their foundation with the pattern. They are satisfied with an acquisition that meets their own necessities. That is a poor thing. I want to reach that which it is the mind and purpose of the living God to give me. Paul and Paul's gospel are the pattern of that. You become partakers of the grace that would make you up to the pattern, or you are not a Christian at all. That grace, if you did not hinder it, would work you up to it.

Turn to Acts, and you will see what Paul was appointed to do—to be a minister and witness of those things which he had seen. On his way to Damascus a light shines suddenly round him, and Jesus was revealed to him in the glory. That is what he had seen—Jesus in the glory. Simple it is; but its reception involved the most wondrous consequences. We all admit that man is naturally at a distance from God; not on terms of intimacy, and that he ought to be. Nothing is so condemnatory to man, the first creature of God on earth. A conscience awakened

wants that distance removed, and the first thought is that of Cain, "I must repair it." Of course the offender is the one who ought to do so; but he cannot. It must be done by one not under the penalty which is on him. God can do it through the intervention of Christ; but the intervention even of Christ must be from God's side, not man's.

Do you understand the nature and object of God? Christ came out to declare it; Satan has been trying to darken the knowledge of God from the beginning. Until you know what God is in His own essential nature, you are not on the right foundation. Having to do with God in His own nature is the only solid, unshifting foundation for a soul. The only-begotten Son He hath declared Him —disclosed an unknown subject, the heart of God. God in His own nature is essentially Love. Who knew it? No one but His own Son, and He came to do His will, and He knew His heart towards poor lost sinners in the world. And what was His will? That His heart should be set free to take His prodigals to His arms to express itself in its own mighty love. He was found in fashion as a man, and as the exponent of the heart of God He carried out His love, which was a love for ever. Like the good Samaritan, he to whom He became neighbour, needed no other neighbour after He took the whole charge of him. Now God is free in the strength of righteousness to open His heart.

God gives me the gift of eternal life; not merely does He bring me to heaven, but that gift is the expression of the love of God. The glory is opened, and the One who has accomplished the purpose of God in redemption is seen in it. God's satisfaction for sin altogether is thus revealed to Paul, and the glory shone out on Paul, and not a word is said of the sort of man he had been. Had he

continued under the law, that glory would have destroyed him. But in another place he says, that the more he looked into it, the more like it he grew. Remember Paul is the pattern, and we have to look at Jesus as Paul saw Him. Everyone of you who knows Him at all, knows Him in the glory, for it is there He is. There is not a particle of light that has reached the soul that is not the light of the glory of God. We ought to have the sense of it; but whether we know it, or not, does not change the wondrous fact. What is the gospel? Why, that you have a Saviour in the glory. Where get full satisfaction for your souls? Go to the glory; for you have a Saviour there, and only there. If Christ had done only all that was required of me it would have been but human righteousness; but He did the Father's whole will, and finished His work. (See John iv.) It was God's work that that poor woman should be saved. We have such a low idea of what the gospel is. We think it is merely that Christ has come to save from judgment. That is not it; but God desired to have such as I am in the very nearest circle of glory to Himself, and that none but Christ could bring it about, and He was ready to do it. After, as well as in his conversion, Paul was a pattern (Phil. iii.); he wanted to get back to the sphere of the glory which he had seen. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Where my spiritual history began, there it ends.

The Lord grant that your hearts may be exercised to know what God is in Himself. His heart has been satisfied to the full by His own Son. It is easy for me to travel into all the regions of the glory of God, if I have entered it from the right side, the love of God. All Christian truth is compromised if you have not the full foundation. The Lord rests in the magnitude of His love.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 Cor. xi. 26.

When the Lord instituted the supper His own death was future, and the Holy Ghost not yet given, and the disciples could not understand what it meant. When He gave it to Paul for us (*v.* 23), His death was finished, and His resurrection had declared its value; for He was on high, able to give gifts, and pour out blessings upon His people down here.

It is well to recall to our minds what the meaning of this supper is, and what we do when we partake of it. We have now again broken the bread, and drank of the cup; and what has that meant? We have shown the Lord's death, and this will go on *until He come.* Death is an awful thing, and man does not like to think of it. It is the king of terrors to man; it is the wages of sin, the ending of all the pride of life, the end of flesh as fallen. Who among men love it, to show it forth? But this death is the Lord's death—death of the Prince of life! Yes, He was once here, and man put Him to death; and He will come again to judge the quick and the dead. But our thoughts flow upon another line than this. They begin with God and the Father, who has enabled us to feed upon death, to find our aliment in it, to take it and bear it about in us continually. His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His way our ways. Man rebelled, and God

pointed His Son to the ruin, as the occasion in which He could glorify God and the Father. He came from the Father, the gift of God, to lay His life down. Never did the marvels of His person as Son of God and Son of man shine forth in their glories more preciously. As Son of God, He would give effect to His Father's counsels, carry out His Father's plans, though death and hell withstood Him. As Son of man, He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and could show His integrity—obedient unto death, the death of the cross, and His fitness to be a ransom. What a combination of marvels came out in that death. Through His death He was to nullify him that had the power of death, that is, the devil—His death led on to by Satan, in whose hour it was accomplished by man. He left the grave and the unseen world, as Gaza was left when Samson had been a prisoner, and took the gates and cross-bar upon his shoulder and carried them off. So He led captivity captive, and rifled the grave of its prey, and left it rent. His death proved, and showed out the principle of all man's actings here below; and the perfection of His human nature showed out the thorough evil in the human nature of all others. Crucified through weakness, He was obedient unto death, bearing the judgment (as the just One) of the many unjust. Man as such cannot feed on death, much less on the death of the Lord, the Prince of life. A saint can. We have, for we have found in His death our life. The Rock smitten gave forth living water. We have found in His death that in which we can have fellowship with God about sin. We judge that He alone could bear its penalty; we judge that He has borne it. We feed upon it, thinking with delight of how it is our Red Sea between us and Egypt, the world around us; how it is God's judgment passed

upon all that we were. The table is the only place that rallies God's children here below; and here each time we come we feed on death. But then this is not confined to the table; it is our principle of life here below (2 Cor. iv. 10), and of God's actings towards us. (*vv.* 4–11.) Are you in your daily practice thus feeding upon death, making His death your food? Shut in by His death as Israel, by the Red Sea on one side—the prospect on the other is, "until He come!"

A GOSPEL ADDRESS.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 9–21.

THERE are two things very manifest. The first of them is, the world as such does not know the true God, nor Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. (John xvii. 3.) The second is, the result that the believer that does know Him gets eternal life, and this eternal life is not merely the communication of blessing; it has got a whole history connected with it, as to how it was brought out, and as to the way it works when it is possessed. We find in this Scripture three things remarkably brought before us. (*v.* 9.) What the apostle Paul was, his occupation as a believer. (*v.* 11.) Then an appeal made to the world as to not knowing God; and thirdly, he comes down (*v.* 14) to that which is the turning-point to sinners, and to the saints too, what is not known to the sinner, and what the believer has got built upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I should like, just in a simple way, to look at this 21st verse. If I take man as set by God in the garden of Eden—God had displayed His eternal power and Godhead in creation, and He had separated a certain part of the earth where man could have perfect delight. Now a soul like that could not take in what He here says. (*v.* 21.) Have I met His mind? Then a blessing will be mine. Have I not met His mind? Then I have no claim upon

Him; that is only righteousness. But here it is, "They shall see the measure of my delight in Him brought into heaven, a people that will be the specimen of what His right is to be there." Put it home to the conscience of any person that is not saved. Has God a pair of scales? Come then in the name of the Lord Jesus, and you are perfectly welcome to all that Christ has been given. Christ took my place in judgment, and I am to take His place in glory. "We become the righteousness of God in Him"—that lasts for ever. Men suppose their minds are capable of forming a just estimate of God. Now God says, "My ways are unsearchable." Christ is earth-rejected, but heaven-owned. But there is another thing connected with this. I find that God has been before man, and that if you come before God, you must come in His way. People generally begin with "*I*," and talk about religion, "*I* desired to be instructed;" but God says, "I have done the work. I sent my Son; gave Him a cup of wrath to drink, and raised Him again." If so, let me be the first poor sinner. God ought to be the very first Person to be trusted! Has God taken the whole thing into His hand, and left me nothing to do? *Nothing.* What can you do, when Christ has done it all? What could you do, if Christ had not done it all? How could you meet His mind about God? about yourself as a sinner? The conscience gets scared if you get one thought about God. "What I have presented before you," God says, "enables you to be as perfectly satisfied in my presence as I am."

Verse 20. Here is the message he had got, that God did not need reconciling, but that man needed to be reconciled. Now it is a very humbling thing for a poor sinner to have to go to God and say, "Really there was such suspicion of Thee in my heart;" but most easy, if I

go on the ground that, "He hath made Him sin for us," &c.; that God hath shown Himself out in this way. If my soul can take that, and say it is true, I have got two most astonishing things brought before me. I can say to God, "I can trust Thee to take away all that lurking suspicion that is constantly stealing up in my heart, because Thou didst make Him sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Well, now, beloved friends, I will turn back to the early part of the chapter, where it is not a question of sinners reconciled by blood. No one has any part in working out redemption but the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. No man can boast of having had anything to do with creation excepting to spoil it; and what have we to do with the providence of God? Nothing; we do not make the sun to rise on the just and on the unjust: God does it. You cannot take the soul that sinned, and make the clean out of the unclean. The work of the Son of God in creation is nothing to the work of the Lord Jesus in redemption. God took care that man might not be brought near in the favour due to man had he been righteous, but in the full favour due to Christ.

Verse 10. Now the heart of many a Christian trembles at this word, and trembles because the soul has not true rest in the last verse—"made Him sin for us," &c. Paul knew his judgment was passed already. What is the Christian as to his sins? He is one whose sins Christ has borne. What have I got of my own in that? Nothing. Christ for Judge, and Christ for acceptance. When Christ reveals Himself to the soul, we become part of a new creation, and the claims on it are not the claims on the old. It turns to God, but it has got to watch, and I have

got to watch having it, that the flesh does not hinder it. The Holy Ghost watches over us, and Christ in heaven watches; but the new nature is brought in over the old by all that process.

Verse 9. It should be "*acceptable*," not "accepted." Paul found that by the power of that quickened understanding given to him, he could look back to the Lord Jesus in the perfect consciousness, that he and Christ were one, that Christ was his life, and he wanted everything in his life to be according to Him. Can you and I escape being made manifest at the judgment-seat of Christ? No; little and great—all will appear. Paul faithful in service will appear there, and all that forsook Paul will appear there.

If He has brought me into fellowship with Himself, the life that is in Him has flowed in me, and given me a new nature. If He has given me a new nature, which am I to walk after? If God's Son thought it worth while to come down to the cross for me, and is gone up, and watches me now, I think it is worth my while to live to Him; not to do things merely, but to live to Him. And when I begin to live to Him, I find it is not only right and proper, but I find it is joy, handing up things to Him, no matter how little.

Verse 11. Is there anything, beloved brethren, children of God, do you feel there is any more unveiling of your sins or of what you are in God's presence? You are the counter-part of that death of Christ. What are you? What are God's thoughts about you? What is the ground of His dealing with you? Is it your faithfulness? No; it is all Christ from first to last. He thinks it worthy, meet for Him to receive all that come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ

Verse 12. "You see I (Paul) am not wanting to praise myself. I have not been seeking to set up myself in any way, but this Lord Jesus, 'who loved me, and *gave Himself* for me'—I thought I could blot this name of Nazarene from the earth, and He said, 'I want you to come and love Me.'" Then, in verse 14, he comes down to the power in his own life. Did Paul mean his love to Christ, or Christ's to him? People are very wary of saying, "Christ's love to me; God's love to me." But the fact is, if you do not, you are qualifying your love to God. If thoughts of God's love are presented to you, you can praise Him.

Verse 15. Now the whole world were dead in trespasses and sins: "He died for all, that they which live," &c. That is the life of the soul that would recognize His love. Do you love great things? Ah! the greatest thing in the world is, that I should *live* to him—by *constraint*, if you please; but it was, "The love of Christ constraineth me," that the thought of the heart should be, "There is nobody worthy but the Lord Jesus Christ." "He, the Son of God, has looked down from heaven, and told me that He, the Nazarene, that I thought not worth while thinking about, is up there in glory, and He wants me (Paul) to go and serve Him; and *I will go and serve Him.*" The hearts that were full of Christ would go and speak everywhere of Christ. Here Paul, going about from one place to another, is led captive by Christ. Paul saw the heart that loved him was the same. We might be placed in His providence to sweep a crossing, or be in a cellar all day long; but all the love of Christ is there in the heart, and the heart in that way made partaker of the life of Christ. It is a lantern, and it shines out, out into all the circumstances you are in; it all shines in the love of Christ.

Nothing can extinguish that when the heart is walking in faithfulness to God according to his position.

Verse 17. It is a real change, not a mere figure. The Christian has got a nature, a new nature, that fits him to receive the things of God; and this nature has got its own characteristics. My nature as man is selfish; "I like, and I do not like." The new nature acts spontaneously; "Abba, Father," rises to the heart of God. All the circumstances through which we saints may have to pass are so connected with God. I am thankful that God is God, and will have His own way.

Verse 19. "Hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." What a beautiful thing it is in speaking to the poor sinner, that one can go and talk to him as one that has tasted what one speaks of; to find to the joy of our souls that God is God, and to bow to Him, that we may walk as under the eye of Him "that loved me, and gave Himself for me." Oh, the thought of Christ's love to us! There is a speciality of feeling towards His saints. He loves them, cannot but love them, is under a constraint to love them "to the end," as those given Him by His Father. God cannot have variableness, or a shadow of turning! It is not merely that it is true of Him, but it is true in our hearts. Do you think of that Christ that was a "Man of sorrows" in patience as now in heaven, and occupied with poor sinners, and has a love in His heart to communicate to you individually? Does Christ do it to you individually? Have you ever thought of that love of Christ? The heart knows itself under the heart that loves us, and the effect must be my love to Him that loved, and gave Himself for me.

THE WAYS OF GOD WITH A HEAVENLY PEOPLE.

2 CORINTHIANS xii.

CHRIST Himself is our life. We are in Him; and the Head cannot say to the feet, "I have no need of you." Christ would not be a true and faithful Son of the Father unless He carried us Himself into the Father's house. There, then, He is for us, and the Holy Ghost dwells in us. This is not the life, but is given on the ground of the life which has come down from Christ. The earthen vessel is inseparably connected with the eternal life, and the result is conscious weakness within and difficulty from without. The scope of this chapter is not taken up as it ought to be, even by intelligent *babes* in Christ. (Paul was but a babe just born when he was caught up into the third heaven.) The Lord Jesus, who was then the beginning of the new creation, had certain thoughts about Paul—thoughts which should not be limited to Paul, but such that each believer who gets to understand that he has a right to be in heaven, and gets into the *habit* of going in there (do not you and I know heaven as the home into which we are constantly driven, whether we like it or no?), finds that Christ means us to learn the very same lesson which He taught Paul. Paul saw bright things there, but these were not so bright as the ways of Christ Himself. In the transfiguration He

was there Himself, and His face put on the glory in its brightness, but *that* was not to be compared to Himself.

The Lord anticipated certain evil results in the earthen vessel, in which the treasure dwelt, that would impede the rightful action of the germ of life in the apostle, and He sent a correction. The end of this was, that the apostle became perfectly sentient in understanding something of His Lord in His walk here. The Lord did not want any thorn to keep Him right; it *could* not have been given to Him. But He was as one blind and deaf, never doing anything save His Father's will, and guided by His word. In the perfectness of what He was as Son of man, He could walk straight forward, never taking one step too quick, even though He had all power. His life was one of perfect communion with His Father; He would not let the words He spoke, or the work He did, be His own, but His Father's. But Paul was not this perfect One. How was he then to be carried through his course? Merely by the power of God, like the prophets? No, there was something to be wrought out in him. "I find it difficult to regulate my prayers. I would *desire* in everything to say, 'I come to do Thy will;' and on the other side, 'I would be as clay in the hand of the potter.' I want the God who has given the life to direct it; for that life must be so sentiently developed in me, that I may know how to step on the stepping-stones which Christ formed through the world." Paul needed this thorn in the flesh, this crippling, that he might get conscious fellowship with Christ. He was more of a cripple than Jacob. Oh, I do not conceive that Jacob's cripplement was one half so much of a cripplement as Paul's! He was altogether crippled, and the Lord makes him feel what a very poor thing he is. His was to be a life of perfect realizep

dependence like Christ's. Christ wanted to have him not only guarded against all boasting, but as a child of resurrection, knowing that his whole life depended upon Christ, so that he might glory even in infirmities. An aptitude to think of self is an infirmity, an infirmity of a *babe* too! He would have liked to have his life, and to be able to *spend* it (as the younger brother—Luke xv.—did), taking it out and spending it away from God; but Christ did not mean that—He meant that the eternal life He had given should be guided by Himself entirely. Paul *could* not have it in his own keeping to spend without the *present* upholding power of the hand of Christ.

There was something medicinal in the way Christ used Satan here. Very likely in Satan's mind *destruction* was the thought; in Christ's it was salvation. It was sanative, curative, preventative. It never was in Christ's heart to think what "I like;" it was not His nature. He took the place of a perfect Servant, and would never bring Himself in. Was there ever a will so strong as Christ's? Never. What was so remarkable was, that its only acting was in perfect, voluntary, intelligent subjection. Paul was brought to this in quite a different way. God used His arch-enemy, who had been Paul's master, to give the man the consciousness that, while he had the eternal life, and a fitness to go into God's presence into heaven without the slightest discomfort, the eternal life was one that only Christ could use and direct. Often we get hold of new truth, and the mind becomes one-sided, and we forget to judge ourselves. It was as natural for Christ, who had put the eternal life into that earthen vessel, to watch over the danger of it as to give it at first. *We* like to take one side—to be always on the mount. But that is not Christ's way; and there is such a thing as

blending the two. That is one of the ways of heaven—God giving Paul this feeling of insufficiency and weakness, that might stop the flow of blessing to the apostle, but could not stop its flow from Him.

There is something uncommonly beautiful in Christ first putting the eternal life into a vessel, and then carrying it Himself. Paul did not know the road; Christ did. The more you are inwardly sentient that you cannot keep or spend that life the better. Christ has springs in Himself; Paul had none. Our only fountains are in Him. The streams of joy I had this morning are not a fountain. They may have come in from Christ at the back of my heart, and rise up again, and flow forth; but we can get our wells choked, and we *do*. "What a poor thing I am!" is the best you can say about yourselves, the only form of expression you are justified in using the "I" in in the presence of God. If a saint knows his weakness, he may express that. Can you expect to be in God's presence, and not know it?

In the first chapter of this epistle, we find that in circumstances down here Paul would have liked to have the pure life in himself. But that was not God's purpose. Satan meets him, and says, "This is *my* world." And Paul is let down into prison, and gets discouraged; but in thinking of it, he saw above it all the God of resurrection, who could do all He pleased, the fountain of all his comforts. God lets Satan lock him up, that He might show *Himself* there to let him out again. Fourteen years after that God says to Paul, "You have now to apply to yourself the principle I taught you before."

When Paul saw his dear Corinthians going all to the bad, what spring of comfort could he have, save in the God of

resurrection? You will find that in your passage down here, you have constantly to challenge yourselves as to the extent to which you are acting on that principle, especially in difficulties. You and I do not like the wilderness; it is such a disagreeable place. God sees it as the path in which He will give you the opportunity of exercising faith in the God of resurrection. You will find it so in all the duties and relationships of life. The sentence of death lies on all. Never take the side of the flint that cuts except to use it as an opportunity to bring God in. This makes the life of an *honest* pilgrim so happy. I do not know what to do with that child; but, blessed be God, He is the God of resurrection. The everlasting One *means* us to go through the world finding plenty of difficulties, in which He will answer the faith of His people. Look back a year, two years. *Which* have been the happiest times—those in which God was waiting on you as your servant, or those in which you did not want Him? the time written over with His interferences or your behalf, or those in which He made no entry?

THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

BUT as to me, away with the thought of boasting, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He that can say "Our Lord Jesus Christ," ought to boast in His cross.

In 1 Cor. i. 24, Christ is called "the power of God, and the wisdom of God;" and in 2 Cor. xiii. 4, it is said that "He was crucified through weakness." But "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Cor. i. 25.) In the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ I see God's combination to make good His ends, and to give effect to His counsels and purpose—in contrast with man's too.

As to man—two pieces of wood nailed together, and a few nails, with a hole in the ground, was an ingenious but malicious mode of death for a hated object. This was man's combination, though Satan took care to put in his power through the world (as Jew and Gentile), and to show forth what man's flesh was capable of as acting against God.

But in the Lord Jesus Christ there was God manifested in flesh giving Himself; meeting Satan that He might, through death, destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage; that He might test and show out the character of the world, and the essential contrast between the state of Himself (holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners) and sinful man.

And here first burst forth the light of God's character in

truth, holiness, and grace. Cover over what Himself was, and what man, in contrast to Himself, was, He could not have been revealed in truth. He told it all out in and by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The character of His estimate of what became Him to do in dealing with sin, and what the sinner deserved at His hand, was seen there also: in holiness it was fully told out.

And as to grace! what free-gift actings in love are there seen. The only begotten Son sent down from the glory on high, to bear the wrath due to us that we might be enabled to share the glory given to Him, and be loved even as He is loved.

And the marvel of His person may not be passed by—God manifest in flesh. Such was the Lamb of God. Sin in man was the denial of God being over and above man. The Son of God, as Son of man, bare its judgment. To Him the judgment was no little thing. It drew forth from Him the cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Words of full and agonizing import in themselves, yet but feeble expressions when He used them of what He felt, the volume of whose heart and mind was infinite. Who He was stood plainly forth, too, then and there, as Psalm xxii. shows, for what no mere creature could do was found in Him. Forsaken by God, He did not forsake God.

Such was the light which shone in our Lord Jesus Christ's cross. And what a measure does it give of what we were ere we called Him, Lord. A measure of what God thought of our sin—of the only thing which we could call our own. Who should carry it into God's presence? Who should settle it? And having borne its judgment, settle our consciences for ever? One and but One alone could do these things; and His glory stands forth confessed by His having taken up that cup, and set us free for ever!

LECTURES
ON THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

I.

EPHESIANS i.

IF you look at the 3rd verse, and down to the end of the 6th, it gives in a simple way the key of the epistle. If you attend to the superscription in the 1st and 2nd verses, you will find that you have the key-note of the whole epistle. A man when going to write on any subject will just drop in the beginning what he is going to enlarge on. The 3rd and 6th verses bring out to light the peculiar aspects of truth in this epistle.

Remark, before the apostle can get on he stops; his heart bubbles up with, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Blessing that his heart has laid hold of by faith, and which has been substantiated to his own soul. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Man gropes through the world without a bit of evidence of these things till, like Paul, he has a ray of light from heaven, and his faith becomes a reality, and he acts on it. "Blessed be the God and Father," &c.

Observe, first, the *God* of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, second, the *Father*. If I say, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, I could also say He was the God of Israel, or He

is my God; but here it is *God* and *Father* of the Son—not a Son by adoption or creation, but the Only Begotten in the bosom of the Father, before all worlds, possessor of a being that never had any commencement. Next, there is the display of His glory as the "*God* of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *Father* of *glory*." (Read 17th to 23rd.) I get there the person of the Lord Jesus presented in the place where He is distinctly able to call God, "God." When on earth He called God His Father, but never, save on the cross, "My God." If all He said down here is gathered up, you will find a guardedness until where there could be no question of using the term, "My God," as if He were only like Paul or John. The forsaking of Him was as wonderful as the honouring; He, the only One who could possibly be in that place, standing between God and Satan, bearing the whole wrath of God, carrying out the perfect mind of God. There could be no mistake *there*, as to who He was when He said, "My God, My God." When He rose He again used it, saying, I go "to My God and your God." He was going where all in heaven and on earth would know Him, not only as the Servant, but as the One (because having been *such a Servant*) seated at God's right hand. A Man in glory, not a glory of subserviency, but of government; every knee to bow to Him, "of things in heaven, things in earth, and things under the earth," &c. If all up there see none but this Lamb on the throne, as the only One from whom blessing can flow, we know Him not only as that, but as Head of a body—"the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." If you compare all the displays the divine Being has made of Himself, you will find no glory anywhere in the old creation like *this;* this throws all the rest into the shade. If He has power, where am I to look for the mightiest

display of it? Ah! His power and wisdom shine nowhere as in this scene where the Lord Jesus Christ is raised up from the dead, and is sitting in glory at the right-hand of God as *Man*.

This title, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," is needful here; it is the relationship that is presented. God is presented associating Himself with that very Person, *that Man* who down here was God manifest in the flesh. If I say, "God," I get into a scene either of the old creation or the new. In Adam I am in the old scene, and I get the new in Him who is up there, Head of the new creation; but if I say, "Father," that title brings me into God's own proper eternity, into infinitude, into what the Father was with the Son before all worlds. A creature mind cannot lay hold of the thought of a Being whose existence never had a beginning. I can only receive it on the credit of another. The end of the third chapter brings out infinitude which the mind cannot grasp. The *heart* can lay hold of it, but only because of the Lord Jesus Christ being there. If I turn my mind to the breadth and length and depth and height in connection with the infinitude of the divine Being, my mind cannot grasp it; but when I see the central object is *Christ*, Christ *loving me*, love presented in a human heart, and He Himself *mine*, He in the very centre of the infinitude of God, able as Man then to fill me with all the fulness of God, I can lay hold of it; and it is the only way that a creature could have to do with infinitude. I am brought by the Father to this Lord Jesus Christ, blessed in Him, and the love in His heart is made to bear on my heart. He has got a people down here, and He is filling them with all the divine infinitude, "all the fulness of God." Can we say He is filling us? How He

has to empty me to get the heart filled with it! Wondrous to look up there and say, There is He, my eternal Lover; I cannot grasp the infinitude of God, but I can say, *He* does love me. He has gone up there as the communicator of eternal life. He can communicate life to you and bring you into connection with every blessing in Himself. He can touch your eyes to make you see Him the centre of all the infinitude of God, the only One from whom all the fulness of God flows out.

Remark the God and Father of *our* Lord Jesus Christ. There is something so sweet in putting in *our*. You can say, He is yours, as I can, He is mine; as much yours as mine. Observe the distinction between putting an object before the soul and the soul adopting it. Look at the Lord Jesus seated at the right hand of God, and hear God saying to Him of Saul of Tarsus, when on his way to Damascus, "That one is your property." Saul could not admit as a Jew that he was the property of some one else, much less of the Nazarene; but when the ray of light shines into his heart he says, "*Lord*, what wouldst thou have me to do?" He was no longer his own, but Another's, and in the keeping of Another who could say, "Now I have made you mine, I shall watch over you as one of My sheep, and when you get into thorny ways I must have My eye everywhere looking after you." He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. He is the universal Master of everything. Faith says, "I own Him Lord of all, I mean to be His servant, not taking a step till I know what He would have me to do."

There is peculiar sweetness in being able to say, "Our Lord," to Him of whom God says, "That is My only begotten Son, the One in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead." And to think that He can love a poor

thing like me, and I can love Him! *Our* Lord, the one to whom we belong; our Proprietor who can do just as He pleases with us.

The word Lord has two meanings. In the Old Testament it almost always means Jehovah when printed in capital letters, and in the New, "Lord" is often applied to the Lord Jesus because of His being Jehovah, God manifest in flesh, the self-existent One. It would mortify a Jew beyond measure to apply this title to any but the divine Being. As Peter said, "God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." All was to be given into His hands, to be recognised by all as the anointed servant—the Man who has all power everywhere. They did not know why they were to call the babe *Jesus*, but God knew. He was the only one to whom that name could be given; He was to be the exponent of what God is (names were always given thus in the Old Testament). God knew that He was the only One who could settle the whole question of sin. God must find One, holy and undefiled; *He* alone could go and stand in the gap, He alone in redemption could bring them into a new place, breaking the power of Egypt.

We never find in Scripture the term "anointed Son." It was the anointed Son of man, the One who alone could settle everything. God gave Him the Spirit without measure; He was anointed with the Holy Ghost. Here it is the relationship of this anointed Man with Him, who quickened and raised us up together with Him who is now at His own right hand in the glory. Unless we see this we cannot get hold of all the glories connected with the Lord Jesus, and put them in their right place. God must have the *first* place, and He will be first. He must display Himself in His own sphere. He could not by coming into

my little circumstances to express all that He is; He must take me into a scene where the Son of His love opens out to me the sphere where His glory is all displayed, and there I see the largeness of it. This Son is in circumstances quite large enough to bring it all out.

The thing that makes it so difficult with us to deal with God is, that the root of sin is within us, and it always wants to bring in something of *self*, and God will not have it. If you want blessing you must let God be first, and get into the second place yourself. It is a most blessed place—God saying, "I have got you there to fill you with all the fulness of blessings in Christ." If you do not keep in the second place you will not get a continuous flow of blessing. If you watch you will find yourself continually slipping out of the second place, and beginning with "*I*," instead of Christ—saying, "What am I to have?" God says, "What is Christ to have?" He can pick you up as a stone for the temple, but for nothing in yourself, only as the fruit of what the Son of His love has done. Selfishness is awful for a creature. If you say God has put the Son of His love for Himself in glory, to fill up the hearts of His people with all His own fulness, having raised them up and seated them in heavenly places in Him, what place is there for *self* there? It is not only the broad fact of our blessing in Christ brought out; but, what has He left out? Nothing; "*all* spiritual blessings," everything He can fill us up with. You are wrong in speaking of God as if He cared for nothing but the rod. Ought not He to be well spoken of, to have brought you to this place, to be filled up with blessings? The want of speaking well of God comes from the want of faith in Him as the Blesser.

Whatever God says, it is done. He said, "Let there be

light," and it was done; and God said, "I shall be the Blesser of a people chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," and it is done. What could they who are in heaven understand by it? No angel now can understand it as a poor sinner who believes can. They are not ruined creatures saved by grace, and identified with the Man at God's right hand. When He spake the word it stood. Not merely was choosing us in Christ the act of One who could speak the word, and it was done; but the act of One who remains, and is, the Blesser of that people for ever. First, filled with all spiritual blessings, then in heavenly places, then in Christ. What an amazing thought, ALL blessing ours in Christ. If one single thing in Christ is not mine I have not all. God says ALL. A Jew began with earthly blessings, getting his store houses filled. God begins with filling us with spiritual blessings in Christ. It is blessing connected with the working of the Spirit in us.

In what sense is Christ connected with the Spirit of God? Not only did He send the Holy Ghost down, but with one little word He converted Saul, and gave him the Spirit of life. If I belong to Christ, I may find myself a sheep of slaughter; but I think not of that, but of my Lord Jesus up there, Head of a body vitally united with me. I may be a sheep of slaughter down here perhaps; but *Christ* my portion is up there, and He is saying, "I am the only begotten Son of my Father; I who have been in His bosom from all eternity know the heart of love and infinite fulness of that Father, and if you are a son, I want you to have the full idea of the blessedness of believing in My name, because His heart's delight is to fill you up with blessings in Me." And has the eternal Lover of our souls such thoughts to-

ds us? I cannot get a more blessed thought than t *I am His* and *He is mine;* that this anointed Man, e centre of all the divine fulness, loves me, saying, "I ve loved, and shall love you unto the end." It was in hrist God's choice was made; Christ having done the ork to make those chosen fit for the Father's house. He s up there without a veil, a living Person, and people who believe in Him can look up and feel the affections of the Father flowing through His bosom to them.

Man handles what he calls "high doctrine," making *himself* the centre. God's doctrine is making Christ the centre. What a God this is, having in His own proper eternity proposed a plan that should bring forth all His glory, bring it forth for us poor sinners to be sharers of it as being one with Christ. It is important to see the personality of God and of Jesus of Nazareth. People have got their own range of thought and habits: man has got his ways, and God has His. Adam in the garden of Eden could not be compared with the last Adam. The first Adam was told to take care *not* to do what God told him not. The last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, came down, in obedience to the Father's will, to empty Himself and go to the death of the cross. He was to be the display of all that God is.

When people speak of the sovereignty of God, they think that He is arbitrary. Here God says, "I have taken My own line; I have taken My own Son and made Him head of a people chosen in Him before the foundation of the world." It is arbitrary, but, oh! the largeness of the grace that thought about such desperately evil and ruined things; and, long before you ever existed, knew all about you and wanted you to be one with that Son of His love, and the expression of what He is. Do you begin with

yourself or with God? Have not we served that apprenticeship long enough—continually looking at what *we are*, and what we *can do*? The place to begin at it is, to see God *first*, having given you that Son of His love as a free gift, having chosen you in Him before the world was.

II.

EPHESIANS ii. 4.

IT is in my heart to speak to you a few words upon the mercy of God. One of the great difficulties in connection with such a subject is its exceeding fulness. One hardly knows where to begin. God is *rich in mercy*. It is not only the wealth of the mercy of God, but that mercy is part of His character, a part of His very nature of which He cannot divest Himself. The very context illustrates what God's *rich* mercy is. In chapter i. 20–23, we are shown the Lord Jesus Christ raised up to His own right hand, now sitting there, and in everything God marking all His delight being found in that *Man* who is with Him on the throne. A mere man could not sit on the throne of God, but this One is such an One that He is placed there on the throne, raised up by God Himself, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Go all through the present age, and you will find nothing to be compared with what that Man has got. There is nothing in this age, or in the age to come, that is not His, and all things must be put under His feet. And not only so, but there is new glory. The earth-rejected One—God has seated

Him at His own right hand as Head of the body. And while He sits there, a body is being formed down here which, to the mind of God, will be a body proper to such a Head in the glory.

But if we follow Him, we shall find more glories still put on Him. He created all things. If the character of God is to be shown forth down here, who but *that Son* could show it, so that all who saw Him, saw the Father? If it were redemption, none could touch it save that Son; if it be the setting up of a kingdom, *He* is the only one to be King; but not to be a King on earth, but reigning over the earth, surrounded by a heavenly people, after putting on them all His own beauty. Is it a fact that Jesus of Nazareth is at rest on the throne of His Father, all honour, and power, and glory, His, and that He is forming for Himself, whilst there, a people to present to Himself without spot or wrinkle? What brilliancy of light the apostle points us to! And then he puts before us the quarry whence the Lord is picking up those whom He is going to fashion for such glory.

What a contrast to the beginning of the chapter is this —Satan having got the mastery over the mind of man, and no one found in nature not subject to these lusts, and Christ, in all dominion, power, and glory, looking down and forming of *these* a body fit to be taken up there! And the apostle could say, "He has enabled you Ephesians and me, Paul, the persecutor and blasphemer, to know that we are some of these; not looked on by God according to the pit, the miry clay, the lusts in which we wallowed, but according to this union with the Son up there, as those quickened together with Christ." But I not only think of Paul and these Ephesians, but of myself. I know the *pit whence* I was taken, and I can only account for it *by*

saying, "Ah! it was God, *rich in mercy*, who picked me up, and made me to be one with Christ."

Do we as individuals know this doctrine? God not only a God of life, but this living God having a certain character of His own, on the ground of which He took up persons dead in sins, raised them up, and made them sit in heavenly places in Christ. If so, it must be all on His part. It is not of him that runneth, nor of him that willeth, but of Him that sheweth mercy. There is no dealing of God before the day of Pentecost, in which mercy is put out in so marked a way, as from that time to the day when Christ will come to take His people up. It is mercy, rich mercy, from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—mercy to Jews, and to these poor unclean heathen, mercy not only taking poor sinners out of everything they were in, connected with lusts and death, but mercy coming to take them up out of it all to a place inside heaven, fitting them for a place in God's house.

"God rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us," &c. This expressing God's wealth of mercy is here in contrast to grace. By grace we are saved through faith; but mercy is connected with giving those who are dead in sins *life;* and grace again with holiness, through faith (God's gift) in the atonement. One of the most vivid places in which mercy is referred to is in Exodus xxxiii. Paul, when arguing with Israel in Romans, states that all are included as guilty that God may have mercy on all, not on the ground of their obedience, but on that of His mercy. (See chap. ix. 15, 16.) "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," &c. It does not come forth from him that runneth or willeth, but from God. It is something rising from God, and flowing from Him. Turning to Exodus xxxii., we find that Moses had been

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called up into the mount for the ordering of the tabernacle. No sooner is Moses there than the people show that they are tired of being God's people. They cry out, "Make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him;" and all their trumpery ornaments, nose-rings, &c., are given to make a god. They turn their back on the living God, saying, "Now we have got a god of our own making, and we do not want to know *Him*." What a thing, to turn the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made with hands! Moses pleads for them; he knows the value of an appeal in God's mind. The Lord hears it, and spares. Moses then says, "Show me thy glory." The Lord answers, "I will make all My *goodness* pass before thee." "Israel shall not escape; they think they can make a calf of gold, and despise me. They do not know Me; I shall have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Mercy is the prerogative of God. Though there has been the denial of everything, and the setting up of a false god, yet mercy can flow out to meet it; but the sole and only One it can flow from is this God, and none but this God.

Who can say to God, "What doest Thou?" Did you ever call upon God to reckon with you? Is God the only Being who is not to have a will of His own? He laughs and mocks at those who would bring Him down to their level. What He says, He will *do;* "He *will* have mercy on whom He will have mercy." Am I to say that *mercy* will not do for me? God came out there in His fullest character as the God *rich in mercy*, the only Being who could, and who can, have the right to have *mercy* on whom He will. How could I look at any *of you*, and say that you are like Christ? Christ will

have you apart from all that you are. God sees you the very opposite of what He is; but He says, "I am determined to have them; I will have My own way; I can use that wealth of mercy which I rest in up here, for the chiefest of rebels that can be found down there." Why did He look on me when I was dead in trespasses? Because He had a right to pick me up, and give me life. Power is one thing, and the character of Him that uses it another. Satan has power, and he uses it by lies which lead souls to destruction. Ah! but God has a character of His own. I rest on the individuality of God. God always acts without consulting any other individual. Whom did He consult when He created the world? Whom, when He proposed that His only Son should come down to die? Whom when, after seven thousand years of man's rebellion on this little globe, He purposes to make new heavens and a new earth? Nobody. And when He said, "Ah! you did not look to or own Me as God; you were dead in sins, and I quickened you"—did He consult anybody? No; and now He is bringing one bit of truth after another into my soul; and when He takes up souls He consults nobody, and if any come into collision with Him they must be swept away. There is that entire individuality about God, and a character of His own, that regulates all His acts. And this is so sweet in Exodus xxxiii., where He says to Moses, "My glory is too great a sight for you to look into; you must be put in the cleft of the rock, covered with My hand whilst My glory passes by; but all My goodness shall pass before you, and I will proclaim My name, the name of the Lord before you." "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy."

How beautifully God's character shines out in that

uthoritative, "I will shew mercy on whom I will shew nercy." Israel shall know this mercy (and in the end Israel *shall* know it). All its springs are in Him. Has He a character of His own? And are you because of that like one at rest in heaven where the Lord Jesus Christ is, blest according to His merit, with all blessings in heavenly places? If I come to what is in self, I find nothing but what is of the first creation; but if I come to the new creation, I meet what God has created in Christ Jesus. I see Him set up there as the slain Lamb, my accepted sacrifice; all blessings due to Him, and the curse due to me, but it was borne by Him. What right have I to go where the glory of God is? Moses had to be hidden in the rock, because he could not see it; but I can go, just as I am, into the full blaze of it. Ah! but only *in Him*, who is seated at that right hand—not in my own name, but in *His*. If in my own, I could not come, but I dare not show any hesitancy; I have perfect acceptance there, not on the ground of what I am, but on that of being one with Him who is the perfect expression of God's love. I can go in there with His acceptancy. Is there one affection of your heart that does not find a perfect response? Not one! Is that the ground you are on, *that* the rock out of which the water of life has flowed to you? the ground out of which you are daily drawing strength? God says, "Having given *this* perfect Son of My love to die for poor sinners, tells *out* what My thoughts are towards those on earth who have eternal life in Him."

Ah! the human heart is deceitful, and desperately wicked. People say they believe all this, and the next moment say, "*But*, oh! *I* am such a failing pitiful creature." So you are; but you should spread out all your failure and evil

before God, and the confession of it would just prove what the *God* is with whom you have to do. "Ah! but the heart is so deceitful"—still turning back to what self is. When one has taken up Scripture, and He has shown me there my utter ruin, and that the Son of His love is the One on whom alone my soul rests, then I know that it is not me, but God; not my thoughts, but God's. Are you on that ground? Does the contrast between God and yourself turn you from every thought of self in His presence? Man cannot be separated from self, save as knowing himself to be in Christ. That links the heart to Him, but it makes me abhor self, because He is so perfectly unlike myself—self thinking of every vanity, and of pleasing the flesh, and God showing the contrast in that Son of His love. There is the beauty of His using that Son to carry out His plan of mercy. God has got something to woo me, but it makes one say, "What a vile creature one is;" it makes one loathe one's self. What a God! hiding sinners in the person of that Son seated at His own right hand—His hands and His feet being witness for them that their sins are washed in His blood. Ah, poor sinner, no other tidings for you, nothing else will do for you; there is no hope save through this mercy of God, quickening your soul, and bringing you nigh to Himself by the blood of Christ. It is a finished work to which you can add nothing. Do you begin with self or with God? God began with Himself, and He ends with Himself; and you must begin with Him, and end with Him. He alone can say, "I have a right to do as I will; and I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."

III.

EPHESIANS iii.

IN the first chapter there were two things especially the apostle wanted these Ephesians to know. First, What was the hope of the calling of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory? God had so used the brightness of the light of His Son to shine into their souls, that they knew they were called by Him. Then there was a certain hope connected with the calling, and He wanted them to know it also. Secondly, he wanted them to know the field that had been thrown open, the inheritance—"what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." It will be a much more brilliant display of glory when all those rescued from Satan are there, and God is enjoying that display in glory. Then, thirdly, it required that the Son should come down to be raised again, and the very power that raised Christ, works in them to give fellowship with Christ.

There are two things brought out in this third chapter, and I think they escape believers very much. (*vv.* 10–12.) The first thing is the way that the manifold wisdom of God is made known by the Church to principalities and powers in heavenly places. You know one of the things that the Holy Ghost by the apostle warns us about is not to intrude into the question of angels. (Col. ii. 18.) It is very important not to go on ground on which the Spirit of God does not lead us; but then I find that Christians have *got wrong* thoughts about angels. For one thing, they give the

angels a power of intelligence the word of God never does. They think angels know the mind of God, and they do not; *we* lose an immense deal by not understanding it. That these Ephesians were part of a glorified body connected with a Head in heaven, did the angels know? People quietly assumed that they did. They had learned certain things about God in providence and redemption, but they had not learned, until the Spirit of God began to unfold it by the apostle, what this manifold wisdom of God was in the Church. The word "church" means any number gathered together. The *Church of God* means those gathered together by Him out of the world.

I would make one remark in passing, and that is the question of association with Christ while sitting at the right hand of God. I never get this truth until I see the place assigned to Christ at that particular time. Rejected on earth, He is taken up to heaven, and is testified to by the Holy Ghost as the One in whom all fulness is. It was when He had ascended up to heaven, that He is testified to as Head of the body. If it is a question of being received, why am I received? It is a righteous thing with God to receive anyone who comes in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then as to the question of responsibility. Enoch walked *with* God, seeing by faith Him who is invisible, and God took him. Abraham was told to walk *before* God, and he did, and God cared for him; and what is the character of the *Christian's* walk? Not merely walking before God, but it should be God walking in me. I am to walk like a son of God, but not by human effort, but by the free Spirit in me, and all the light working in me a certain loving of the things of God, and a certain shrinking from all things contrary to Him. Did Christ walk as a good man down here? Did that characterize Him? He

d walk as a good man surely, but He walked as the Son f God, and that is what is also to characterize us. He made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a Servant," and passes on to the cross where He was alone with God—just the expression of what His mind was—perfect subjection to the Father—Nazarite perfectness. I get an almost perfect expression of what that life was in Paul, but I get no power to communicate life in Paul. When I look at *Christ* I am changed into the same image.

Now for the second part of this chapter. It is quite natural for the apostle to feel for what an important thing he was called. One of the constant, frequent thoughts of my soul for the last forty years has been, Where is this church down here? And how can I get the souls of the saints, loved by God, into such a state so that I could say, "There is the expression of what Paul spoke of"? If He is coming; well, what is the state in which He will find His people? Can it be said now of the children of God in London, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come"? I know many of you have had the same exercises about it—even deeper perhaps—the same intense desire to see the children of God like those who wait for their Lord, knowing the sweetness of looking up to God, the sweetness of looking up, and being fed by the droppings of that love. I have the strongest desire to see it brought out more and more, not only for the children's sake, but for the blessed Lord's sake, when He shall come on that cloud of glory.

Verse 15. "Of whom *every* family" (right translation). There is no company of any kind whatever that God puts *this* sanction upon which is not connected with Christ. Abraham's family was connected with the state that was

to come. Verse 16. Now he prays for them, for us, dear friends, for me. Verse 19. Am I as he speaks of here? Are you as he speaks of here? Verse 16. "The riches of His glory"—"by His Spirit." I incline to take it more as the Spirit connected with the *moral* glory. Nothing will be more beautiful than the outward glory of the new Jerusalem; but now he is not talking of the glory of the city, but of the *moral glory* of the Father's house. The only begotten Son bringing them to His Father's house, and there He will show them all His Father's love and explain it all to them. The external glory of the city is very different. There all will be brilliant; but the Father's satisfaction is the expression of the house. There, there is the rest of love; that is the moral glory. Oh, the ways of God are beautiful! When we think of it, it is not only beautiful in itself, but in connection with a poor saint on earth finding his way along. When God created the earth it was very good. Then what led Him, when man had made nothing of God, to make the Seed of the woman bruise the serpent's head? God knew who it was, knew there was no one He could send into the conflict but that Son of His. He sent Him to Israel, but they would not have Him; and He would not be King, if they would not own Him as God's King. But God's ways are beautiful! I will have My own way; I will bless them to please My own heart. For My own Son's sake the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, and Israel shall be there.

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Verse 17. That is not John xx. 22. The Spirit is always there, but there is something more than that, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Does He dwell in *your* heart? If I dwell in a house I should be expected

to be found there; a person coming there would always find me at home. The Spirit never leaves the house. He is always at home there, but does Christ ever leave the house? When anyone comes to see you, do they find Christ there? Well, if I could catechize you when you got up in the morning, was the thought of your mind, "Well, what a blessed person that Christ is"—and you go on your business with that? If so, God says "There is a man where Christ dwells." If I had met Paul at any time, I should have found that he had got *one* subject, and that was always Christ; one object in his heart, that was Christ. If you called on me at any time, would you really find that Christ was the Master of the house, and that He was dwelling there? It is not the apostle's mind to call you off from circumstances. Christ puts the circumstances for you to do everything to Him; it comes into all the details of life. He has got a large heart enough for a man sweeping a crossing, and He can say to him, "Sweep this crossing for Me." It is not work apart from life, but works manifesting Christ in your life in little things. Looking at the history of the disciples, it made all the difference whether Christ were in the boat or not; if the Almighty Son of God was in the boat they could not be swallowed up. It will characterize the whole life. They may kill us in one way or another; never mind! Paul says Christ is there *if* they break the earthly tenement they let me out to go to Christ.

God has a vast plan, and He has spread it out in His word; am I to know all that glory to come? Ah, but there is the centre of it all, and that is Christ. All God's plans and counsels roll round Christ. He is the end of them all, the beginning of them all, the centre of them all. God says, "I am *set* for the glory of My Son; I have got My

plan about Him, and, poor sinner, do you not know Him? do you not love Him?" Well, let Him dwell in your heart, and you will be filled unto all the fulness of God. "I shrink," do you say, "from being one of that company for whom that prayer was offered." Oh, what a silly thought! A poor feeble person like myself, or you, some poor old thing, if we have Christ directly in our hearts by faith; well, God says, "I can add nothing there." I look and see Christ in that heart, and I can sit down in holy communion with Him in spite of all infirmities. I have often to tell God that I do not understand the worth of the blood, but I say, "Thou knowest it." It is simple faith; we have got the Spirit, and can lay hold of it. When there is all the perception of what the mind of God was, that was what the apostle wanted. I know there is no name so delightful to God as the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He never could send a soul coming in that name away empty. I do not want to get to the end of it; I bless God I never can when I am in the Father's house, when I see all the blessed intercourse between the Father and the Son. I bless God it is perfect and unexplorable in the vast compass of it. It is infinite as God is infinite.

Verse 18. This is interpreted to us in human language by the blessed Son Himself. (*vv.* 19–21.) People say, "Oh, Paul was in an ecstacy when he was in that prayer!" Well, he took care to say that he had not asked as much as he might have asked. "According to the mighty power that worketh in us;" well, it has wrought in you if you are a believer. But people say "Paul was an apostle." But you must not run down the life that Paul had; as an apostle he taught always that the divine life which he had as a *believer* was beyond the apostleship. The soul by the Spirit gives back to God what He had given to it. (v. 21.)

It is not an unimportant thing that there should be great joy among Christians: "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Have we learned that we are really dealing with God? If God loves a cheerful giver, He has shown us how large a giver He is; He has given His only begotten Son; He has given His Spirit, and has brought us into the enjoyment of all that He is as our God and Father.

IV.

EPHESIANS iv.

DOWN to the 10th verse of the ii. chapter, the apostle is looking at the counsels of God to be made good in a people on the earth through that mighty power by which Christ was raised from the dead. From the ii. chapter 11th verse, to the end of chapter iii., we get him looking at the change that had taken place upon earth, from the time that Christ went up rejected by Israel, and the rejection of Israel confirmed by the wickedness of the Gentiles. In the Church Jew and Gentile were not recognized as such, but both together are looked at here as the habitation of God through the Spirit. Then in chapter iii., he takes up the mystery God had revealed; and in the end of chapter iii., we get that blessed prayer that brings us to this—that Christ may be in our hearts the centre and pivot of everything, as He is the centre and pivot of all God's thoughts; that we may not only rest in Christ, but that He may really have that place in our hearts, as he says, "Filled unto all the fulness of God;" so that everything connected with us, everything that flows forth from us, may flow forth

through Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. This Christ, who in this way is revealed to us, is the centre of all God's plans and counsels. In chapter iv. 1–16, he shows the provision God had made for the development of this blessed truth down to the end of time in apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers—persons able to carry on the work to the end, not in the power of human nature, but in the power of Christ, that there might always be a testimony in this scene, something sure to be displayed because it was secured in Christ. Verse 17 gives not only what is secure for us in Christ (and this fountain open and unsealed is sure to pour forth its waters, and the people sure to receive it), but he takes up the portion of those that are to receive it in detail. I have no doubt there is a connection between ii. 8–10, and the beginning of this 17th verse. He is speaking of something that in man down here he can call and calls God's workmanship. It is not that each believer has his path marked out for him here—that we get elsewhere.

In chapters iv. 17, v. 21, we have what these works were, which as connected with us make us to be connected with God—make us to be the workmanship of God. It turns out then they are *truth*, *love*, and *light*—three things which evidently are not of the first, but of the last Adam, and could not be understood by man cast out of the garden. You are *called* as created in truth, and this creation is inseparable from love and light.

iv. 18. It is a remarkable expression as connected with the state of man in nature, "alienated from the life of God"—"come short of the glory of God;" but this is stronger still, because it says "alienated from the *life* of God." "You do not mean to say I am to walk down here as having the life of God?" *Yes*; "God hath given us

eternal life, and this life is in His Son." They were called from that time not to walk as good men, but, as having the life of God, we are to walk as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. We cannot be connected with that Son by the Spirit without having the life of God. There are two portions of Scripture which are very similar—Eph. iv. 22-29, and Col. iii. 9. This is the peculiar position in which the child of God stands now—I have put off the livery of Satan, and have put on the livery of Christ.

Verse 20, he expresses surprise at them. Verse 21, "as the truth is in Jesus." This is not the truth of the gospel that presents the mercy and compassion of God to the poor sinner afar off. This is the extent of grace given to us who have come in. "I do not see you apart from Christ. I do not see you as part of the world; how can you live as part of the world?" Now this is a grand thought. As to our display of truth, I have got to run as a man that has been taken out of the hand of Satan, and become a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is to be the character of my walk, having put off the old man and put on the new? I am to walk as a man delivered from the power of darkness, and *so* connected with Him who is the truth, that without His body, of which through grace I am a member, the very glory that was prepared for Him could *not* be His. What would be the bearing of it upon Christ, if all power was put into His hand up there for *His* body the Church? If there was no such thing as *the* body, there could not be the glory of the Head; it *would* be a dishonour to Him that had been put at God's right hand. Well, God wanted to honour Him, and therefore the power of God came forth, and called such a man as Saul of Tarsus, and gave him certain light, and then to *others*; and that light has come to us, and what has been

the effect of it upon us? When the Lord Jesus Christ came one night, and looked into my heart, that eternal life which is His came forth to my soul, and I got a new position from that time, having Himself before me. This new position was one clean outside of the world—entirely a new position. Christ up there in heaven, Head of the body, and believers down here on earth, members of that body; that truth was revealed to my soul. God looking into a soul quickens it. God does not turn the rebel into a pit of despair to learn what He has done. No, He never does that; they never could learn it there.

Well, that is the first great thing connected with these works. It has got the standard of everything in Christ. I have got to do with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is this Lord Jesus Christ making the throne of God a mercy-seat. All that Satan could do could not prevent the Lord Jesus taking up such a man as Saul of Tarsus. He takes His place not only as the Giver of life, but as the life of those who believe on Him. In Scripture there is no redemption apart from the Lamb. When it comes to the question of redemption, the Lamb is on the throne before it could be unfolded to man. It must be true in Him, before it is true for us. The thing was true in Him. He had gone into the presence of God, and sat down there before He woke us up. He was at the right hand of God. God saw us wandering about seeing what we could do, and then He not only let the light shine down upon us, but gave it force to enter the soul and quicken us. It was all wholly grace.

Verse 26, &c. There was a number of things that were practically inconsistent with the truth, and the man of God was to watch against them, and seek God's strength to avoid them.

Chap. v. 1, 2. How is it possible for me, as a mere man, to look upon man on the earth with anything like love? What can lay hold of the heart and draw forth love? You cannot have it in the heart and it not go forth to man. (John iii. 16.) It is part of the truth connected with the new creation; it is not in nature—that is cold; it grows out of the love God has had for us. Is there a believer, a child of God, that does not know that Christ gave Himself a ransom for us? that does not know the Father's love to the children. The faith given to the child identifies him with the Father. Did He wait till I loved Him? Have I a single word I could say to Him about my love except, "I love Him because He first loved me?" What is my position as a believer? I have the Father, and He has an only begotten Son, and the Spirit has taken possession of my heart, and possession of a great number of hearts down here. Love begets love, and a person cannot find himself truly loved by God without a heart of peculiar interest in those in the same position. And he has to vindicate the love of God to poor sinners; there are many on the wide common of the world still. The new creation—the bringing into vital union with Him, and the display of that life that was brought out when He cleansed their sins, and brought them into perfect liberty and peace in the presence of God. Our being children of light flows out of our being of the divine nature. Who can hold that truth as the expression of God's feelings towards us, and not find himself brought into the light, and find at the same time everything for him? He who is without any veil over His face, is able to rend the veils of the hearts of poor sinners that all the light of God may shine down into their hearts, that everything in them and around them may be brought out to their own knowledge.

Verse 3. Who that is in the light of this fellowship does not see that the body is for the Lord? I am like a bound man. His love constrains His own that they should not "henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." Hence they cannot make their bodies their end, live for themselves down here, but unto Him. Though He is sitting at God's right hand, He wants us to live for Him. The poorest as well as the richest can do this.

Verse. 8. "Light in the Lord;" is not that light? Ah! light of the purest kind. Verse 17. A man that has got sight does not feel his way as one often sees a blind man groping about the street. One naturally inclines to turn and see in such a case if he is near a crossing or any danger. But if one sees a person walking in that way, if the eye is clear one supposes intoxication, and gets out of his way as fast as possible. This is the place you are put into—the truth, love, and light; and the works are truth, light, and love displayed in Christ, Head of the body in heaven. Verses 18–21. There may be fictitious strength, but it cannot last. Then he goes on to the effect of light. It produces joy in the heart. If you and I were abiding in the light, how natural that word in Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord," would be to us. Abiding in the light of the glory. It is there for us. We have got the principles connecting us with Him, but if we were abiding in that light flowing out to us, that blessed joy of Christ flowing into the heart, there would be the way of expressing it, making melody in our hearts to the Lord.

Verse 20. Now there will be that giving of thanks for all things, &c.—that is the effect. A great many believers say, "Oh, yes; but I find the wilderness a very inconvenient place. I get very weary; I find it very irritating mixing

ch a company of believers, and their flesh and my sh do not get on well together." What led Paul in erything to give thanks? He was abiding in the light; e saw all the untoward things but as occasions for the ove of God to display itself. One is obliged to go through this bit of the wilderness, suppressing what is naughty in oneself. But, ah! we do not think that God formed that wilderness for Himself. God wanted the opportunity, a One who is the eternal Lover of His people, of being alone with Israel. He knew their difficulties; God was with His people. "They have no water—they are thirsty; I shall have the pleasure of opening the rock for them. Have they learnt their lesson? Do they call upon Me? I brought them out, that in my dealing with them they may learn that I am God. I must make more difficulties for them. I did not take them across the Red Sea to drop them. I am present with them, as watching over them, that I may see I have the first place in their hearts." God was jealous over His first-born son. (Exod. iv. 22.) May not a Father have a thought that he would like to have the affection of His child? He took them into the wilderness that He might have the opportunity of teaching them that. Ah! beloved, I am not throwing a stone at anybody in this. If any feel it, I hope they take it home to themselves. It is a very great thing to give thanks for all things at all times. There is something disappointing all my thought. Well, God is behind it; I must find Him there; it has not brought God to His wits' end. The more I am in the light, the more I see there is my heaven up there, and everything connected with that glorious Person is watched over even in m the feeblest member here; for I can give thanks. Y must be in the light to give thanks always. I do

say, *I* do it. That we do not is because there is independence, and we do not see God in our circumstances. We are at school; but there will be nothing of the kind when we get home to our Father's house. If you were in subjection to God, you would see it is an easy thing in everything to give thanks. Every day brings out things which seem untoward to us; but they are not untoward to God, but are opportunities for God to display His love to us. There is nothing more sweet then, than to say, when everything is contrary to nature, "Not my will, but Thine be done." I will take up Thy will in these things, satisfied to let my own will go.

V.

EPHESIANS vi. 10–24.

THERE are three parts in the redemption of Israel out of Egypt. There was, first of all, the making a way through the Red Sea; getting them on the road with God on the other side. Then, there was a certain school-time, when God had them in the wilderness, where He had them in training; and they were to take possession of the land and dwell in it. There is a remarkable connection between the Ephesians and the people when they got into the land, laying hold of the things given them; for they were to take possession of all the things in the land. Really, without their knowing it, God had given the land to the Son of His love. When we follow Israel into the land, we find they *would* not and *did* not take possession of it. Why? Because they had not faith. All the

teaching they had in the wilderness alone with God, did it teach them to have done with themselves? No, it did not. Now in this scripture God teaches us that there is a certain armour a saint must have, if he intends to get into the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. God giving the land to Israel was one thing, and Israel knowing how to conduct themselves so as to get possession of it is another thing. Now we shall see in Scripture that while every blessing is secured in Christ, I may yet turn to the people of God down here and say, Have you got them in possession? If I have not, I ought to challenge my heart.

If I turn to various scriptures, I see how far Paul recognizes that such people as the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians, had these spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. He shows that he does not think they had, and he is obliged to set to work to show them what was in Christ, and that these spiritual blessings were not enjoyed by them. In 2 Corinthians i. 20, we find that "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen;" and when I turn back to the first epistle, I find that these Corinthians had received certain blessings and powers from God, but they were walking entirely unlike the apostle—not walking like persons separated practically because knowing Christ at God's right hand in resurrection glory. They had got hold of the *doctrine* of having been crucified together with Christ; but had they the practice of it? No; they were going to law one with another. There was something clearly very wrong. There were all sorts of works of the flesh as if they were not dead at all; and in chapter xv., many of them were even calling in question the resurrection, through the deceitful influences of evil doctrine upon them. The great mark of

the apostle Paul was the brightness of his walk as a man raised from the dead. Paul beautifully depicts the way God had made good the doctrine to him; but the way He made good the doctrine to him was by always rolling him into the valley of death down here. If I were walking with a friend as a man raised from the dead, the thorns and briars in the path could not stop me; they may stop my friend if he is not walking in the same character.

Now look at Colossians: it goes on the same ground somewhat as Ephesians, yet he speaks of some of them as not holding the Head—the Head holding them was one thing, and their holding the Head was another. Abraham was a strong contrast to Lot. Whenever Abraham was at his wits' end, there was God ready to help him, and go through it all with him. Then the Galatians. Satan is very subtle and crafty; he got them to add on a little insignificant nothing. They consented to add on the circumcision, and so to compromise the gospel. Christ being crucified, the world was crucified to them, and they to the world. The way God acted was to put man at the other side of the cross. Now God has given us all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. If I meet a child of God in an omnibus, and see faith in that man's soul, I should know that everything that God saw to be in Christ belongs to him. When he is getting settled in Christ he has no idea that everything in Christ belongs to him. But it does according to God's purpose. He has, however, to grow up into that; he must know Christ as the Head of the body He must know how to stand there, and not only how to stand there, but to follow on in communion with God that these spiritual blessings may become known to himself, that he may know the whole grace of God as one sifted of

God. The thought here is, that we are to stand fast in the heavenly places; and to stand fast we must lay hold of these spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ.

Verse 10. It is not a piece of armour, but the character the child of God wears who has learnt God in the wilderness. If Israel had learnt God in the wilderness, they would have known how to stand fast in the land. If you and I have learned what it is to know God, we should understand how to use that word, "Rejoice in tribulation." We should know how to count upon God, as God said through Haggai, "Be strong, O Zerubbabel; *be strong*, O Joshua; do not suppose you have to do anything; it is My time to bless; *be strong*, recognize where and what *I am*." Here it is, "Be strong in the Lord." If He has given Christ to be Head of the body, if He has given Him all possession of all in heaven and earth, we may well be strong in Him; and if we are not strong in the Lord all the armour in the world is of no use. "The power of His might." The same power that raised Christ works in the believer. It is just the same power which took a Saul of Tarsus, and enabled him to say, "I am a member of Christ in heaven." But you say, "I want to know about the armour." If a person does not know what it is to be quickened together with Christ, raised together, seated together in Him, he does not know what it is to stand fast in the Lord. If I look at Paul's life, he looks uncommonly like a man quickened together with Christ. He was just the man that to my mind lived by and with Christ. If we are really standing fast in Him, the effect of that life is that it displays our weakness, but it is a bright light by which people take notice of us.

Verse 11. "The wiles of the devil." I should myself press that name given to him here—"devil." In two

scriptures Satan takes the particular form of accuser; in Numbers, where he accuses Israel, he brings up a number of things, many of them true. God had taken up Israel on the ground of what was in Himself, and He did not behold iniquity in Jacob. But the people did not know that. In Revelation the accuser of the brethren is cast down. He accuses still: the weakest and the strongest will find it out. It is one of his great ways to take the eye off Christ and His work, to bring up our inconsistencies, and then we are confounded. God's answer is in Numbers vi. Ceasing from the life in the flesh is the answer. If Christ be risen, then I am accepted. But then it comes to our mind, "I am living as I did before; I do reckon myself dead, but, alas! Satan is too strong for me." Nevertheless I say, "Take a knife; let the Lord Jesus cut what He will. Christ has come into the world to destroy the works of the devil, and He will destroy them in me. I have got this old man, a horrible old man, but I will reckon it dead, because God says it is dead."

Now let me ask you, Do all Christians see this? Do you take the death of Christ as the answer to all that? There is forgiveness of sins through His blood, and I rejoice in it. My flesh could not go into the glory—it is utterly bad! God says, "Do not trouble, I will take care of all that." If God were to say to me, "I will take you into heaven just as you are," I would say, "Oh, I *beseech* thee, do not, there is sin in me!" When He changes me, every one of these things I struggle against now will be gone; I shall have a glorified body like that of Christ.

Now let me put this question, Do believers see these two things? *They do not.* We have to learn them, and then we have got to stand fast in it, and know the one who comes against us. Satan has no wisdom if you look

at him in the presence of God; but he knows *man;* he has had nearly six thousand years' experience. He knows those that love money; give that man a little bit of money. And that man is fond of a bit of good character—well, just put a bit of good character into his hand, and that will occupy him. *Satan is very wily.* It is a hard strong word to use of a man, but it is not at all unsuitable to Satan.

Verse 12. I do not think that believers calmly recognize that the powers of darkness go into heaven. If I set myself to pray for some spiritual blessing, just when I am thinking of it, I find some other thought comes in. That is the adversary, God's adversary as well as ours. If we think of our morning prayers, our mid-day or our evening prayers, we see the way we are turned from being instant in them. Then comes darkness. God means us to know that we cannot keep the heart's thoughts pointing steadily to any one particular thing. *God* can put the mind just there, and keep it steadily fixed. If you break down, the very consciousness of your breaking down only draws you nearer to God. The wandering Arabs do not care to attack an empty caravan; and the devil does not care much about attacking you if you are empty. But if you have had communion, if you are happy, and have got some fresh enjoyment, the devil will spoil it if he possibly can.

Verse 14. The Lord Jesus Christ is *the Truth,* and when I say He is the truth, I do not mean He is the truth of forgiveness, or acceptance merely, but that He is the One by whom God measures everything. What sort of Person is God? He sent His Son to bear our sins that He might give us eternal life. What sort of person is man? Man crucified Christ—Jew and Gentile. If they

had only known what they were doing, they would not have done it, Satan would not have done it, for it was then that man got his measure. Christ, in what He was, had the right and title to be a provision for sin, and for sin in the flesh? Oh, do not talk to me of my flesh! It is not such a nature as Christ had, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Depend upon it, if it is I, I, I, in myself or my neighbour, it is flesh; if it is finding fault with my neighbour for not being spiritual, it is I, I, I. Now just see how *Satan* got his match in the Lord Jesus (Heb. ii. 14, 15), "that through death He might destroy him, that is, the devil; and deliver," &c.

Verse 14. If my loins are girt about with truth, it is the truth about everything, and it is this that gives strength to a person; and the weakness of another is because he has not got into the presence of God about things. If I have got it about my loins, it is part of my strength. If a man brings anything into God's presence, he has to learn God's mind about it. Christ is there, the touchstone of all and everything. Say I am a great money-maker; well, when I get into God's presence I find the strongest thought in His mind about money is the thirty pieces, little bits of it given for Christ, the Lord of hosts. When the Lord came to purchase the flock, He gave His *own blood.*

"Having on the breastplate of righteousness." Christ has walked through the world and left the marks of His feet, and we are to walk as He walked, to like what He liked, and to dislike what He disliked. If I do this it will be a perfect covering for me. Verse 15. I should connect that as much with "having done," and "standing," as with walking. Both "the peace of God," connected with your emptying your heart out before God, and the "God of peace" from your walking with God (Phil. iv.

6–9), both enter in here as giving rest and quietness to the soul. Verse 16. Do not suppose this is the shield of *the* faith. He says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Well, an arrow comes whistling close by me. What did you do when the arrow came? Did you say, "Oh, there is God!"? and did you look at the trouble and glory in it? I raise my song just where other people sit down and say, "Oh dear, I never counted upon this at all!" God has marked the road for us, and the heart turns to Him, and says, "He said it should be so. Ah! He said I should have trouble, and here is trouble. He said, 'You cannot get on a day without *Me*,' and I cannot indeed get on half a day without Him." And then the heart is kept.

Verse 17. I should take the "helmet of salvation" to mean not merely that Christ is the Head up there in heaven, but something I have put on. The Saviour appears in the wilderness as a Saviour for my course all through. When Paul is speaking in Philippians of how he had to run counter to everything as he travelled on, if it were a bright shining way, it was yet a very rough way, but *salvation* is at the end of it. If I am floating down the stream I shall not talk much of the helmet of salvation, nor the want of it. If I am filling up the sufferings of Christ as Paul was, I shall have his experience daily, and I shall want the helmet of salvation. "The sword of the Spirit." It is not only that we have the Spirit, but it is rather using the word by His power. Christ used it ably in that conflict with Satan, turning aside the sword of the adversary.

Verse 20. If you take the apostle, as he describes himself in this epistle, you see a wonderful instance of a man standing fast with Christ up there. He knew he

had to put on all the armour, and be skilful in the use of it all. It was his service as ambassador that gave him the opportunity of using it to teach these Ephesians. Such portions as Numbers and Job, those parts of Scripture which describe the passing of a people from the time of redemption on to their rest in glory, are not adequately understood by us. I think we want stirring up as to the peculiar power of the life of Christ, and as to the understanding and present enjoyment of these things that are true of us in Christ. In order to this there must be a daily refusal of those things that are natural to us, and a daily occupation with those things that will enable us to meet the adversary in our course.

CHRIST MAGNIFIED, WHETHER BY LIFE OR BY DEATH.

PHIL. i. 18-20.

IT is the practical experience of the apostle's heart in connection with Christ that is so marked in verse 20. The heart of a believer attentive to the Spirit's teaching, must feel that one cannot read this verse, without seeing that Paul had a practical connection with the Nazarene in heaven, that he believed in a Christ who was not in heaven only, but in his own soul, so that he could think of nothing, but only of this Christ. They were very remarkable circumstances bringing out his connection with Christ to his soul in such a way, that afterwards, led by the Spirit, he labours to show it forth. What would not be joy to the heart of Christ, he as a believer in Christ could not joy in; yet whatever had Christ for its object could not do otherwise than turn to his salvation, through prayer and the supply of the Spirit. His only thought in everything was, that "Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or death." He could say, "The labourers are one thing, and the field of labour is another; if I cannot rejoice in them, I can in the Lord, who will make all turn to my salvation, through the supply of His own Spirit." Then in verse 20, he goes on to give a beautiful picture of what occupied his whole heart; and you and I may realize it as much as he did.

Can I say that my earnest desire, and that on which my heart is set as the only thing, is that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death? Ah, Paul, that desire was not thine, but God's thought; and if thine, only thine because Christ's Spirit was in thee, leading all in thee captive to that Christ. Paul was led and sustained by another—Christ. Can you and I say that we have only one simple desire, *i.e.* that through us Christ should be magnified? *We* should shrink from saying so, lest it should not be truth. Paul did not shrink, for it was truth. We should fear lest not desiring it as a reality. He could not; for he desired it as a real thing, and it was everything with that man, picked up by Christ, that Christ should be magnified through him. To magnify anything is to make it appear larger than it is; that could not be so in connection with Christ. But Paul wanted all to shine out in him, so that Christ should be magnified through him; so shine out, that all should be able to say, "What a marvellous thing! there is a man so spending his life for Christ, that he does not care to live if he can but magnify Christ by his death! What a marvellous Person that Christ must be!"

"According to my earnest desire," &c. Not a person desiring a certain thing only, but calculating that it would be so. Paul had this expectation, that through him Christ should be glorified now in the wilderness, that *now* Christ should be magnified. The love of Christ constrained him, drew him along in the path after Christ. Oh, what manifestation of Christ it is, when the display of His handiwork is seen in a Saul of Tarsus; the oil of anointing so flowing down to the servant, that it could be said of that servant, "Like Master, like servant!" What a blessed servant this servant of Christ is in a dungeon, not knowing whether

he was to live or die, occupied only with the one thought of glorifying Christ there, of being a fellow-helper with Him down here! Whether his feet are in fetters or not, he could say, "It is Christ I have for my portion in this dungeon; and whether I am here for life or death, it is my earnest expectation and hope that Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."

Paul in prison had God's thoughts to carry out. Oh, do let us see how far the anointing that made the soul of Paul in prison so full of joy, whether cast there for life or death, has made us fellow-workers with Paul! How far is that anointing enabling us to maintain our Nazarite-ship, enabling us to live out Christ, so that, whatever our circumstances, the power of the life of Christ in us may be seen as in Paul? How far is seen in us, from day to day, the mind of Christ? The same mind that led Him down, even to the death of the cross, is the mind that we ought to have. We are the Lord's free men; man could not bind Paul. I beseech you let that example, that specimen of what it was to have every desire and hope of the heart fixed on Christ, let it, I say, be ever before your souls. Not saved only, but how far, as Christ's eye rests on you, can He say, as He could in respect of Paul, "Well, there is an individual who has but one desire, but one hope, to magnify Me, whether by life or by death." Could He say of any here that all their thoughts and actions, in their own little circle, are all for Him? We are to let the power of the grace that found us, and gave us life, tell its own tale by the manifestation of that life in all our circumstances in our wilderness path.

PAUL'S GOSPEL.

ON PARTS OF PHILIPPIANS, i.-iii.

AT the time of the Reformation man did not get beyond justification by faith. They did not know Paul's gospel, which was the glory of the Christ of God shining down into the heart, even of the persecutor, and filling his whole being with its blessed power. This was the root of his walk; his walk was in the power of that light and life —the gospel as tasted and enjoyed by Paul from heaven. I never get thoughts of this in my own soul without becoming very deeply impressed with my shortcomings on the one hand, and the immense privileges flowing from out of it on the other. Paul, writing from his cell, guarded perhaps by soldiers, could say, "To me to live is Christ!" Sorrow in his heart he had for the bad condition of things. Still he could say, I have "earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified, whether it be by life or by death." (*v.* 20.)

Let us see what characterised his state. That Christ should be magnified, he knew not how; by sufferings, or by patience, or by being sent back to work for Him. The desire is one, that Christ should be magnified; that spite of every circumstance against him, yet that Christ should be magnified in his body. I know no two things so sweet. All that is in Christ, mine; in heaven, His; yet in that cell, in that poor body, He should be magnified. In Saul

of Tarsus there was no room for Christ; in Paul the prisoner the Lord magnified His grace, and that immediately, that very night. What lay at the root of this desire that Christ should be magnified? Ah! that, "to me to live is Christ! All my motives, Christ; all my energy, Christ; all my end, Christ!" Aye, all his springs in Christ flowing into his soul! And in a body, too, that man could bolt in and leave in prison. Oh! could you jot down, in any little interval of business or daily work, "To me to live is Christ"? Knowing, in your counting-house, in your homes, Christ as the spring, the motive, energy? Doing all your duties to Christ because He put you there, and all is to be done to Him? Oh! who is thus Pauline—knocking about the world, chained to a soldier, or shut up in a dungeon, and all for Christ, the risen, the ascended Christ; and as He is up there for me, so am I down here for Him?

Let us look at the root. Christ so full in Himself—He is the fulness of each. The grand characteristic of Christ was, when here, subjection unto death. The disciple has the same eternal life, and must know the dying daily to get the fulness of blessing. Christ died out of the world. Israel would have had Christ, if He would have let His glory out, and taken things into His own hands. The Christian's pathway in the divine life is to obey; to obey in subjection to God. Christ would have nothing except from God's hands. Is it God working in you? God works to will: He claims us. It is a solemn thought, that God has taken us up to desire and to will; and He will enable us to do. Whence can I draw water to turn the wheels of that mill? In Christ up there at His right hand. Paul saw that Christ up there, and his heart turned to delight in Him. Can we see the person of Christ up there, and not know desire after Him? I

am wishing to show you this Christ working in you to will. Is there a backwardness to give up anything for Him? What! for Christ? Not to get Christ, but because you have that Christ, and because He has looked down to take your heart, and do you think anything great to sacrifice for Him when He gives you fellowship with Himself? Oh! could you make a cold calculation as to the worth of that Christ beyond all joy of earth? Am I willing for Christ? Am I acting for Christ?

Two things are brought home to my heart—that Christ has won a place, that all should be at His feet—and He has begun at my heart. Ah! God lets the beauty of His Son shine into your soul, and I claim that your heart be subject to it. I am sure, if the eye has not been anointed to see what Christ has won, we shall not own Him as Lord.

Oh, nothing can stop the fulness of blessing flowing out from that Christ who has passed through death and come out on the other side! In chapter iii., we get the Lord as a living person, and the eye rests on Him as He is now, and as He is to be when He comes forth. I am united to Him in the place where He is, and as dead here my life is hid with Him in God. I look to Him up there, and know His thoughts, not according to what we are here, but as in Christ according to the Father's thoughts of us, who has committed us to Him, and has given us to have a portion with Him; to be like Him, to be as those with whom He is to be the first-born among many brethren. How far are you and I realizing this? Have you part in that life? You have a portion in that Son; are your springs in that Son? Are you waiting for that Son? There is nothing in this epistle but a living Christ, and our union with Him up there; and our fellowship with Him down here in subjection and obedience.

HOW TO BE HEAVENLY.

PHILIPPIANS iii.

WHAT was the power to the converts of early days to be heavenly? It is one thing to see what the heavenly calling is, and another to know the spring of power that makes a people heavenly. We looked at three things last time—the transfer of the person of Christ from the midst of His disciples to heaven; the coming down of the Holy Ghost; the eternal power of God taking possession of their hearts; and the mystery, or what came out in consequence of the martyrdom of Stephen. The twelve had had the personal experience of what Christ was for three years and a half of intimacy. All that time their thoughts were set on His taking the place of King on earth, and even after His resurrection their thoughts went on beating round that same idea. He was with them forty days as a risen Man, His thoughts flowing out according to God's plans. Then they saw Him go up, but even then they did not know that He would not return at that time to Jerusalem to reign, for God meant to make the people one more offer. But He was gone! The magnet that had drawn their hearts had gone off to heaven, and it was impossible not to feel, in thought and affection, that heaven was the scene for them. When He was on earth, Peter, James and John could not, ought not, to have had their thoughts in heaven where their Lord

was not. He was to be the centre of their hearts, and their thoughts and affections were to follow Him. That lies at the bottom of the question—How am I to get heavenly? Get firm hold of the fact that Christ has gone up into heaven, and has not come back. Aye, Christ is gone into heaven, and I can afford to be discovering whatever in me is not like Him. Do not say, "There is no hope, now that things are so low and worldly everywhere," or I shall think you do not love Christ. What do you possess if you have not Christ? Where have you got Him? In heaven. Look to it, that whatever in you is inconsistent with Him there is judged.

The Holy Ghost is the power in the children of God. He is called the Spirit of God. All power is centred in Him as such. He is called also the Spirit of Christ, and as such the expression of His mind and ways. Do you say, "My leanness, my leanness"? Why do you expect anything but leanness and weakness in yourself? But the Spirit of God has come down to you from Christ; and He has brought power and the mind of Christ down into you. Samson, blind, standing between the pillars, might have said, "Yes, I have sinned against the God of Israel, and therefore is judgment come on me; but yet the strength of the living God is with me, and He will vindicate Himself." There was the Nazarite vow, and a vow recorded before, and by God; and it was such a vow as could not be broken on the one side any more than on the other. If the locks were shorn off, his strength, could not remain on the one hand; and on the other, it could not be that when they grew again it should not return.

The living and eternal God showed forth more grace to the Marys, the Elizabeths, the Simeons, and the Annas

than when He came in promise to a David. The people that walked with God in a cloudy and dark day had His strength with them; and they are ever more marked from contrast with the rest. Take Daniel as an instance: all the wisdom of the court found with a captive Hebrew. If you have not the Holy Ghost, you are not a Christian; but if you have Him, you know the power of God in yourself, and you must then not speak of your weakness.

Stephen saw the Lord as the Son of man. The first effect of the glory on Saul of Tarsus was to enable him to preach the Son of God. The epistle to the Hebrews is the opening out of the scene of Stephen's martydom. That might have been the vignette to illustrate Hebrews. We do not get the apostle's mind occupied with what Christ had been down here. There were a certain number of believing Hebrews who were letting the faith slip, and he is bidding them, "Look up, and there you will see a Person in whom all the things you want are secured to you," and all the things given them are contrasted with the tabernacle, &c. In chap. i. it is "that holy thing which shall be born *of* thee"—a series of the highest glories of Christ.

Christians do not feel the solemnity of the subject that they are robbing God of His glory. The thought "I want peace," will not give solemnity like, "How dare I question what Christ has done?" Levity does not become us in the presence of the Son of man in heaven. God has rolled the curtain right back, and shown us what is in heaven. His Son having made purgation, sat down there. (Heb. iii.) Nothing is lost when Christ is Head of the house; but He outshines and pales all the rest, though fulfilling all in Himself. (Heb. iv.) There is a solemn word which I should like to see put home on all our hearts. To Israel it was one thing to

leave Egypt, and another for that generation to fall in the wilderness. We cannot get through the place without God, and we do not want to do without Him. God knows how, not only to show bright visions of glory, but to bring the heart of a man into that position where nothing but Abba will do for him down here, as well as up there. It is not merely that you must go through the wilderness, but that God has so formed it that man may have the opportunity of saying deliberately, "I will have nothing but from God and Christ." He brings us into circumstances in which He is our Servant. The word of God searches you, and will tear everything open. If you give yourself credit for the least bit of will or power, you will go down from that point.

What sort of hearts does the Lord find when He reads yours and mine? Will He see that all the springs of evil are judged? Will He turn away? No; but He will bring in His own deepest experience to bear on our weakness, as He did, in Rev. i., with John, who fell at His feet as dead. Christ looks at the dirtiest thing He can find—the soiled heart of a poor sinner, and makes it fit for the presence of God. There is nothing between you and God now, any more than between God and Christ. Take care what you are about as to eternal realities. It is in heaven your portion is; take care your interests are eternal now. Look at Paul, and see if you are like him in this respect.

THE BEAUTY OF GOING DOWN TO THE VERY BOTTOM.*

PHILIPPIANS iii. 1-16.

I HAVE read a part of Phil. iii., desiring to look at it as bringing before us what were the principles of the life of Paul and of the Christians of his day. We see here, if we turn to the early part of the epistle, what the circumstances were in which he lived upon these principles, the extent to which he carried them out, and the contrast between his doing it imperfectly, and the One who did it perfectly—the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is remarkable the very bold claim he makes in the first three verses of this chapter, as to himself and those he calls his brethren being the only true worshippers of God, and that in contrast to certain other persons. Those he calls his brethren were those who were looking out for the Lord Jesus Christ; and those who walked not like Him, were those whose religion began and ended with themselves.

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." God was before them, and they so saw the Lord Jesus as to be able to rejoice in Him; and Paul so saw Him as to make him appeal to these Philippians to rejoice in Him, and that by

* This address has been already printed, but in order to preserve the connection, it is given here with the kind permission of the Publisher.—ED.

the power of the Spirit sent into their hearts. There was a class of people, who, instead of having everything connected with another world, and finding all their joy in God, were just occupying themselves with things down here. He says of them, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." That is the distinct contrast between religion of the Spirit and in truth, and the Ritualism of to-day. Then he takes up himself, as one who had a right to speak on the subject, and he says as to religion, "Can anyone come forth and measure himself by me?" That is what my pretensions might be as to confidence in the flesh. "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh," &c. All these things were connected with the man down here. Verse 5. Things that give something to *myself*, all gain to *me; I* was the person on whom they were all strung. He says, "I have something that you have not, and it is gain to me. But I saw a Person on whom all glory was strung, on whom it was all heaped up." Well, what follows that? Who took all the beauty out of what he was esteeming and glorying in? A certain Person in heaven—truly despised and rejected by men down here, whom men by wicked hands had crucified and slain. God placed Him in heaven, and He called Saul of Tarsus, and now he says, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." "I could not stand connected with Christ, and have all those things that were gain to myself; I became a prey to Christ. He took possession of me when I was striving with all my might to blot out the name of the Nazarene. He appeared to me, and I was glad to suffer the loss of all things for the beauty of Christ."

Oh, what is it when the Lord Jesus reveals Himself to Saul; that One who had, perhaps, only been known to

him as a character in history! He knew there was such a Man as Jesus of Nazareth. When that Man in heaven lets the light of His own glory in on a soul, what is it? Well, Paul had no difficulty in saying what it was to him. He said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the *loss* of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in Him." The doctrine of Peter on the day of Pentecost was, that they should draw near to the throne of God, on which Jesus was sitting; they should receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost, but they must come in the name of Jesus. As though God had said, "*You* found no beauty in Him; but see what *My* thoughts are. I have raised Him from the dead; and now anybody who draws near in His name shall receive forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost." God vindicates His own conduct. If God was obliged to hide His face from the Son of His love on the cross, He now does something that stands out in bright contrast: "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." When Paul saw Him, everything he had as a man was gone. He saw Christ in heaven, and he got thoroughly cleared out of all things—natural religion, &c.—and thoroughly filled with the thought of the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Now, what was it that struck the apostle? Was it merely that the Son of God had been given to be the sin-offering—to put sin away? or was it, in addition to that, that God had presented His righteousness to him? Far, far more than that: his soul was taken possession of by the Spirit of God, giving him a sight of the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the One who had emptied Himself and brought out this moral glory. The principle of man

is to get as high as he can; that is the principle which Adam and Eve acted on. God's principle is exactly the contrary. That of the Lord Jesus Christ was to go down to the bottom, and accomplish certain things at the bottom; but that was not all, He showed out the mind of God. It struck the apostle as something worth imitating—as something worth following out. "That I may know *Him*"—not merely the forgiveness of sins—not merely the righteousness of God—but he was caught with the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he takes that as his principle, as something to act on, to mould and fashion his life.

As the Lord presented Himself, there was everything to attract the poor sinner. There was the Lord living, sitting upon the throne of God. I see Him coming down to bear our sins. He bore the curse for *me*, and do you say, "I do not see any beauty in that One coming down from heaven to become a Man, and bear the wrath of God for me"? Not see any beauty in it! *I* could not say that, if I only saw my own benefit by it—forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost; but there is far more than that—there is the beauty of the conduct of the Lord in taking this place. That is called the *moral glory*—the beauty of the ways of God. I often say, Supposing the Queen were passing down one of our streets, and everyone was bowing to her, as surely all ought to do; some little child, in its anxiety to see her, falls down—and she stoops and picks it up. A thrill passes through the crowd, every heart is touched, not so much because of the greatness of the person, as of the *way* she does it. She thinks of her own children—she has a mother's heart. It is not so much the person man admires, as the way in which she acts. The apostle Paul says, "If Christ has gone

down to the bottom, I cannot go there, but I will go down as low as I possibly can. He had taken the bottom place, I will try and stand next to Him in humility."

I want to look at that, for I am in a world in which everyone is selfish. If you get to God as Scripture presents Him, you see, "In the beginning was the Word." There was Father, Son, and Holy Ghost before creation. There was creation in heaven — angels were created. When you think of God as Creator, bringing everything into existence, taking the dust of the earth and building a man—do you not see the very principle of condescension coming down? Did He want the world for Himself? All creation is a display of the condescension of God. Why does not the earth reel to and fro? Because Some-one holds up the pillars thereof. God comes down in providence. All the little things are connected with condescension. The Lord Jesus knew all about it; He said, "Not a sparrow shall fall to the ground without your Father." Look at the world, always rebelling against God, and yet He still keeps things in check; the whole process of His government is condescension. If I look at the Lord, there was Messiah to come, and that One is seen in Daniel vii. in the presence of the Ancient of days. But I see Him in the gospel, born in a manger, not in the palace of Herod. Was it not the same principle? I find it comes into Scripture in one place in a remarkable way. Rom. v. 7: "For scarcely for a *righteous* man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." If you were to point out a man to me, and say, "That is a very righteous man, he would not be in debt to anybody;" I should say, "I expect he is a very self righteous man." It would not move my affections at all. But if you show me another man, and say, "That is

very tender-hearted man; if he hears of distress anywhere, he delights to go and relieve it," my heart would warm towards *him* directly. When I look into the whole heart of man, who is the one my whole heart goes out to? Not the people who are climbing up, but those who are willing to go to the bottom. I would say more if I could of the earthly relationships of the heavenly family — parents counting themselves nothing for children. The father of a family and the mother, how constantly they are going to the bottom. If you find a father with half-a-dozen sons, five of them are likely to get on in the world, but the other has a heart, and when he sees anything going wrong between his brethren, will not rest until it is put right. That is the one who gets the father's heart.

Let me just call attention to the apostle Paul. He says he is the offscouring of all things—a model man in that respect. He gives an account of his sufferings as surpassing all of his day—the man set forth to show how far the principles shown out in the life of Christ could be carried out in a man of like passions with ourselves; and were there ever men like those apostles, through whom came all these blessings? Paul had seen the beauty of it in Christ—seen it, no doubt, in two forms. First, the only way in which blessing could come to the sinner, was by Christ's coming down lower than the sinner, when He bore the curse! *I* have never borne the curse—if I do not believe in Christ, I shall. He bore it, and went so low that Satan could say nothing. Paul saw that, but he saw more than that—he saw the beauty of the *ways* of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do let me ask, whether *you* see the beauty of those ways? Is it saying, "Oh, I see He went down, and I suppose *I must* go down—I suppose I *must* take up the

cross?" There is that verse, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross:" does it mean as little of the *cross* as possible—let the heaviest end be upon Him? Is it merely "*He* went down, I *must?*" That was not Paul: he had another feeling than "must" —more than "needs be." God took up Paul, and he was resolutely set; he *would* go down to the very bottom. "I mean to follow His ways, *I* will be like Him in my walk, He came down to the very bottom, and I mean to follow that beauty." In this world while he was here, he was never seeking his own, always the things of Christ, and what comes out? In this world he followed Him, and by-and-by he will have Christ as his gain. When the Lord Jesus comes for His own, there will be no self-denial any longer.

Do you see any beauty in that conduct of Christ's? Could I say to Christ, "Lord, there was a needs be for the curse to be borne by some one, and it was good of Thee to bear it, but what a pity it was the occasion of bringing Thee so low; there is no beauty in Thy coming so low." No, I could not say it.

> "Came from off the throne eternal
> Down to Calvary's depth of woe."

For *height* nobody like Him, for *depth* nobody like Him! And has He given me of His Spirit, and do I see no beauty in that? and have I got, like the apostle Paul, a desire for fellowship in His sufferings? Not as some people make out, that it does not mean literally what it says: "Filling up that which was behind in the sufferings of Christ." Paul never had anything to do with making atonement for sin; Christ had done all that, but Paul did think of having fellowship in Christ's sufferings in his care

for the Church—carrying his life in his hand—he counted everything that belonged to himself as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Well, he will one day be in the presence of his Lord—a very sweet thought to his and to the believer's heart now. If he had been apprehended for something, Christ had apprehended him: "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

Do you know what it is to look at the Lord Jesus now in heaven, and say, "Lord, thou knowest all the glory which God the Father gave Thee to bring to me: Thou hast done a work on the cross, and I am clean every whit: and Thou hast given me the Spirit, guarding and guiding all my life down here; and Thou knowest exactly what it will be when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality, and when this vile body shall be made like Thy glorious body, and Thou shalt have subdued all things to Thyself?" Do you ever think of what is the thought of the Lord Jesus in the glory? It would be like the potter working on a vessel, but what is in the mind of the potter? Here has the Lord been dealing with me all these years, but what has been in the mind of the Potter all that time? It has been no haphazard work. He knew where He would conduct me. The Son could say, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." The Father had perfect delight in Him, and has He not let me already into the Father's heart? And does not the Son know that I am predestinated to be conformed to Himself? We cannot see Him with our eyes, or hear Him with our ears; when He intercedes we cannot hear Him; but that Lord, as He looks down upon us, has His thoughts about His glory in us: He will have us in the Father's house, and what is His glory all the

way through? This blessed way of humiliation. There is all the difference possible between this and a voluntary humility, that is, making yourself the centre of everything. The Lord says, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." The Colossians said, "Touch not; taste not; handle not;" "do not touch this and that," and that is what is called a voluntary humility. That is not Christ taking up the Father's pleasure, who is saying, "Now sin is come in, it will cost Thee a great deal to clear their way to Me, and Mine to them—there will be a deal of trouble in bringing them home; but then there is all the blessing and glory after—the fund of it in the joy of having them here." The Church is the vessel to hold the glory of the Lamb. Is it not condescension on the part of Christ to dwell in such poor creatures as we are? To be sure it is, and the principle I want to press is the giving up of all human thoughts about what is great and praiseworthy, and taking up God's thoughts. Wherever we find Him, He is always stepping down to such poor things as you and me, bringing us up to Himself.

Let us turn to chapter i.; it brings out in a special way the circumstances in which Paul was living out the life of Christ. He was a prisoner in Rome, probably chained to a soldier, many trying to increase his troubles. They were the circumstances of a martyr really. What does he say about them? "Do not be troubled about things, about these people trying to add affliction to my bonds; it will all turn to my salvation, and Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." If *I* had heard that from anyone, I should have said, "That is too sharp. What? Christ made bigger by you! The Lord of all glory be magnified in you! How can you speak of the Lord being magnified whether you live or die?"

Christ was made to appear a great deal more plainly by the circumstances Paul passed through here. He is in spirit above the clouds with Christ, and has got such a love for the One who is always occupied with him, looking at him, that he does not care about anything; whether he lives or dies, Christ will be magnified. Then he puts it into a very concise form, "To me to live is Christ, to die is gain." My life as a Christian is Christ; certainly it includes more than Christ being the object.

The life to live is Christ. The first impression on my heart when converted was, "Enoch *walked* with God"—that was my start. "Now, then," I said, "I will walk with God." Beautiful as far as it went, but I very soon found, as Luther said to Melancthon, "You will find old Melancthon stronger than young Philip." I came to my wits' end; for I wanted a *fund* whence to draw, so as to live it out. You are unable to live out of resources in yourself; you must not act as though your life is separate; *Christ* must be the fountain. They say there are springs in Thermopylæ, exactly the same as those written about two thousand years ago; they have been gushing up two thousand years, and are the same as ever. That is nothing to the life of Christ, and the waters there. If a believer gets to this—"To me to live is Christ"—he must think of Christ not merely as the *end* of all he does, but as the fountain. God must put us back to learn this. In all the actings of life I want the present help of Christ. Who is the noble man down here? A man always living to himself, perhaps giving money to charitable purposes, or the man living to Christ? Not merely that Christ is the fountain, but the principle on which our life is led. Whether eating, drinking, waking, or sleeping, doing all as to the Lord. How can it be otherwise? How can I live

independent of the life in my body? It is all connected with the life of Christ in me. We have eternal life; how can this life be independent of Christ?

"To me to live is Christ." Do I see Him by faith there in heaven? He is there in God's presence, saying, "I died for you, that in grace you might come up here. I gave you forgiveness of sins; now I want your services, the services of every believer." It is the secret of everything as to liberty and power. Paul saw it and clave to the living Christ. The Ephesians saw and rejoiced in it; but in after years they forgot the living Christ, and were exceedingly busy with their own duties as to being a candlestick, not only as to the living Christ, but in all the busy diligence of being a candlestick down here. They had forgotten their first love; they lost immensely by it. While down here the eye of faith *must* be fixed on a certain Person all beautiful and glorious, all excellent in glory, whose heart is jealous that you should live to Him in every minute particular.

In chapter iii. he shows you his boast. You say, "How confident!" Here I am Christ's gain, and I have Him before me as my gain. Persons may say, "That is too strong." "No;" he says, "I will show you One (chap. ii.) not like myself, but who walked this path with a whole heart perfectly—the One I am following." He passed right down to the cross. But who has placed Him in heaven, rewarding Him for all He has done? "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him," &c. He puts Him into a place as Man there. How came Jesus there? He came from the home of the Father—from the throne eternal, to show God's character on earth, and He did it perfectly. If I am following Paul, I find myself perfectly free. I often feel myself called upon to see how Paul

carries out his doctrine—he failed, I always see, on the side that people do not fail upon now. He was devoted beyond discretion sometimes—a devotedness that was not always quite discreet. He spoke to the people from the stairs! Nowadays, people look well before they put their foot down on the mud, or on a flint, even in the path they ought to follow. The blessed Lord was perfect. He was the Man with one idea, one thought—"Lo, I come to do thy will." His meat, to do His Father's will, and He did it perfectly. I see in Him two things—the spirit of obedience and dependence.

What a marvellous person a Christian is, if he be really dependent on Christ! Paul's heart was stolen away by Christ. Are your hearts dependent on that living Person? A Christian is a wonderful person if dependent on Christ; he knows he has nothing down here to do but to be dependent on Him. He tells me His own mind, I tell Him mine. The Lord and I understand each other well. He knows how to minister that for which I am dependent on Him. Are you dependent in spirit? And then is there this obedience of spirit that takes notice of what God Himself is, stooping down as He does? In highest light, which no man has seen, or can see, yet goes down into the depths, and tells us all that He has done for us! The glory came out from down-stooping, in which He presented His moral glory.

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

1 THESSALONIANS i.

THE Lord is coming. Yes, that is true. It is *the Lord;* but I am a son of God, and I wait for God's beloved Son to come from heaven. The very inward life of the believer is formed in connection with the coming of the Lord. The night was dark when these epistles were written; but, as in a starlight night, there was a bright shining of the Star in heaven. However dark the night, and however many difficulties there are, we should be able to see that bright Star. These Thessalonians were not fully instructed as to the coming; their minds were not at peace about those taken to be with the Lord; but Paul does not write as if they were puzzled and perplexed, but brings out the mind of the Spirit quite simply.

This first epistle was probably the first of all the epistles; and when the Lord thinks of us, what are His first thoughts of us? Of the deep sands of the wilderness? No; He knows there is a certain responsiveness of heart in us to the thought of His coming. His thought is, that we are waiting for Himself from heaven. If He lets them come to their wits' end, it was that He might show them He could meet all their needs, and let in the droppings of His love. He always takes occasion of every difficulty to show forth Himself. If I get near the Lord Jesus Christ, I find that there is in His heart a speciality

of thought and affection for a people down here, who are waiting for Him—not for the glory, that is quite another thing. He has every thing that He can personally want; but there is a craving in His heart that cannot be satisfied till He shall come to take us home to Himself. And can I think of this, and not want to see Him? Formed for Christ's own individual presence, the heart cannot say, "satisfied," till it gets there.

Notice the place He recognizes them in. Verse 1: "In God the Father;" there is no meaning in this to an unconverted mind. On the earth among men, how can a people be "in God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ"? "Work of faith." There are many works that have the very opposite place in man's mind to what they have in God's. Man takes what would make a very good roofing, and tries to make his foundation of it. Are there no works the natural result of being "in God the Father"?

"Patience of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ" is sweeter and fuller, and I read it so. Has God made you a king and priest? Yes; but you do not look much like it now? No; but His hope does not stop short of the time when you shall be so. It is an immense help to remember that the Lord Jesus never forgets His coming. There is a fixedness of heart in Him to come and fetch the Bride home to the Father's house, and I can have sympathy with Him in that. The morrow of the believer is formed on the yesterday of the believer, and is connected with His to-day. Where does a soul get peace, but by going right inside within the veil where Christ sits? You must see the connection of what Christ did on the cross with the throne of God in heaven, if you are to have a hope that maketh not ashamed. The anchorage ground of your soul is in Christ within the veil as the accepted sacrifice. . . Thence

I have brought out the knowledge of my guilt, and of my acceptance before God. Have you brought out nothing else from the presence of God? Not the love that He bears you? Was all the love of Christ spent in proving to you that your acceptance is perfect before God? Oh no; I cannot have been intelligently in the presence of the Lord without knowing not only that I want Him, but that He wants me. The beginning of blessing is in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not get to the other terminus till He has fetched us home, till the journey ends in the blessedness to which it is meant to conduct us. My to-day, whether of fifty years or less, what is it but a constant proof of His love? Himself is my yesterday; Himself my to-day; Himself my to-morrow, my Hope.

Verses 9, 10. One of the marks of the people of God is serving the true God; and another is waiting for His Son from heaven. What are you if you are believers? Are you not channels that God has digged for the rivers of eternal life to flow through? Is it no important question to Him if the water flow through them? What are you if you are not that? Nought.

In the greatness of His eternity the Lord can quietly come down and say, "I am watching you; you are My servant." A poor bed-ridden cripple, whose heart is happy in the Lord Jesus Christ, can bear no noise, no light; perhaps the lip dry, the eye dim. God knows that one, if he has the eternal life, as handing up to the living God his little quota of service by filling the little place He has put him in. How can each serve? That is a question between God and the individual soul. God in saying, "Give Me," knows He is endearing the Christ who must be looked to for grace and power to give; but He does say,

"Give Me." What can the poor sinner give to God? There are cups of cold water to be given.

Verse 10. "Our deliverer from the wrath to come," as showing His competency to settle everything even as you go through the wilderness—the present delivering power of Christ, while it is called to-day, for all the difficulties of His people. I should like this question put to your hearts by the Spirit of God: Does God love me? Has the Lord my name written on His heart? Has He had so to do with me that He has formed me for His presence? He in heaven in His Father's presence; I down here serving Him and waiting for Him? The soul formed on His coming cannot be satisfied without Him. The Lord does know all that passes inside you, whether He is the centre round which all that is in your heart is wrapped or not. You cannot have blessing if you have another centre than God. What can be sufficient for you but God's centre, Christ?

QUALIFICATIONS FOR WORSHIP.

HEBREWS ix. 24 TO x. 23.

THESE two chapters bring out in a very simple way true worship. The Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father," &c. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." At first sight it may appear as if this merely applied to the children of God; but not so, for in the question of worship, the question of the standing of the soul of him who would worship, and the question whether the conscience has been purged and purified, is involved.

There is a strong contrast between the epistle to the Hebrews and that to the Romans. In that to the Romans (the book about man down here on earth), man is taken up as a creature against whom the wrath of God from heaven is revealed. The Spirit passes the mind of the apostle through the whole condition of man from the day of creation, without law, under law, the effect of which was that every mouth is stopped, and all brought in guilty before God. Then he shows God in heaven, having arranged that the Son, who was sitting at His right hand, should give light in the world, and contain in Himself the answer to the ruin down here, and so on, but it is always man down here, and how the evil in man is to be met.

Hebrews does not take up man only down here, but the

question rather whether it is possible for man, acting under law, ever to be able to worship God in spirit and in truth; and shows that so far from this being the case, that even the Hebrews had to have the gospel of Christ preached to them, and a new tabernacle had to be pitched in heaven. And in connection with this new tabernacle we get a High Priest, the Lord Jesus in heaven, and in Him eternal redemption, and eternal salvation. And if any person can really have a conscience fit for God, and enter into what the soul wants, the heart must rise from earth to heaven, and know what has taken place there, and become one who dwells in heaven, where the Lord Jesus is.

In Romans we get the light shining down, not man going in. In Hebrews it is not only the throne of God in heaven, and light shining down on earth, but it is the veil rent; and people that have faith can go in boldly and simply into the holiest of all, meet God, and become connected with all the wondrous worship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the true tabernacle.

One more striking contrast I would look at between the feasts of the law, and the feasts, as it were, of Christianity. The first feast in Judaism was the Passover; the second, the feast of Pentecost; the third, the great day of Atonement. In the Passover there was no service for the priest; it rested on the head of the family. And the two truths taught in this feast were the blood of ransom, and the blood of association; but not the blood of propitiation. God said, When I see the blood, I will pass over you. "The people have got the blood, marking subjection and obedience to Me in My ordinances. As My people they are in association with Me, and the destroying angel shall not enter." And there was the blood of ransom; but there was no connection with the dwelling-

place of God. In the blood of atonement it began with the presence of God on the mercy-seat. Association with God we get in the supper, and the ransom in 1 Peter: "Ye are redeemed . . with the precious blood of Christ."

Then Pentecost was a very peculiar feast. When the high priest was actually waving the sheaf, the Lord Jesus was getting up from the grave; and as, after so many days had intervened, two loaves with leaven in them were presented before the Lord, and then they might be eaten, so after the feast of Pentecost (Acts ii.) was the Church brought out; and by the Holy Ghost dwelling down here all the riches of Christ could be displayed.

At the end of the year came the great day of Atonement. Then we get the joy of the camp, and two things connected with this joy; the blood was taken into the holiest as marking the way to God, and was put on the mercy-seat in His presence. There was everything to mark feebleness in connection with this feast. It was only for the circle of twelve months; they began to sin again next day. If the scapegoat carried off the sins into a land of forgetfulness, they would want another next year. The priest was a man who could sin like Aaron. The man set up over them, Moses, was a man who could be cut off before entering the land.

All were beggarly elements, and only temporal, and upon earth.

Just see the contrast in connection with the feasts of Christianity! We begin at the other end, and at the other end of the last of them. We are not to believe that Christ has gone into heaven, and *will make* atonement. If I say, "He is gone in, and there is a Person in heaven who is able to accomplish all," it is not Christianity. The basis of Christianity is, that He has by one offering

perfected for ever them that are sanctified. That is the starting-point. If Christ was crucified, is risen, and gone to take His place at God's right hand, it is most natural for me to believe, that though I have nothing, yet in the power of what Christ did I am presented before God perfected. It is most natural if I say, "My conscience is fit for God Himself, He has bought me with a price; I will only live to Him who died for me."

Now we turn to the portion here before us. The first thing we notice (as being that which has priority of importance in Scripture) is, that the work brought before us in connection with our faith is a work with which man had nothing whatever to do. The Father wrought by the Son, and proved it by the Holy Ghost. For me to look up and see that God has done something, is very different to looking inside myself. The work of the Spirit in us, is in proportion to our understanding the work of Christ for us.

Chap. x. 5. There are two things in connection with this, as bearing on the subject of the divine work connected with God dwelling in heaven. The apostle had been proving the impossibility of a Jew, by the Jewish ordinances, getting his guilt blotted out. Here he takes up the Lord Himself, who comes forward, saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not." "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." From the time that man sinned, the death of a victim was brought in, and prophet after prophet vindicated God's word in favour of Abel's sacrifice in preference to Cain's. At last a system was set up—God in the tabernacle where everything turned on sacrifice. He would dwell among them; but not only were there certain sacrifices offered daily, but there was a great day of Atonement linking all together, and the whole

ritual of sacrifices in connection with it. A Man comes on the scene, and He looked upon as a carpenter's son, and He never spoke against the services of the temple; but when the Holy Ghost comes to explain His mind, it was that the whole ritual of services was now discovered to be all in vain, and He had come to set them all aside. And who was He? The One who was the Word of God. And what His thoughts were before He came into the world is here set before us: "I come to do Thy will; I set aside all sacrifices and establish Thy will." Did the prophets ever speak like this? No; they prophesied by fragments. When the Son came, He said, "I am in the scene, and everything turns round Me as the centre. I will set all aside, and establish Thy will." All was done by the Son, but all was done according to the Father's mind. Here we have attributed by the Spirit of God to the Son all that was in His mind—the accomplishment of the expression of that which had been in the mind of God.

The second thing to be remarked as to the work, we get in verse 15. When it is done, the Holy Ghost is witness to it. Another covenant is to be brought in that will stand and be efficacious. Really everything, when God was dealing with man merely as a ruined creature, brought out sin. When the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to witness of the work done by the Son according to the Father's mind, it is not bringing sin to remembrance, but "their sins and iniquities *will I remember no more.*" There is only one other thing presented in connection with that, and that is what is said of the blessed Lord as to His coming again—"He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation"—and as to the people looking for Him. He was a holy, harmless, undefiled Man, but He had a baptism to accomplish. When He comes

again it will be, "My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation." When the will is done in connection with the heavenly people, He will appear "without sin unto salvation."

Can you understand that the grand doctrine of Christianity is the question of what were the hidden counsels of God in the wicked act of man. Man—Jew and Gentile were connected in putting the Lord Jesus to death. God let them do their worst, but had in His mind the blood whereby the conscience of the poor sinner could draw near.

Christ is upon the throne. I am clean. It is eternal salvation, not temporal as to Israel in Egypt—eternal redemption, not temporal as promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is a work done by the Son according to the Father's mind, witnessed to by the Holy Ghost, and not a work inside us. Is the Lamb as the accepted sacrifice on the throne of God? Is it the testimony of the Holy Ghost at the day of Pentecost, according to the mind of God, that any Jew who had dipped his hand in the blood of the Lord Jesus, believing in that blood, might be saved? That is the gospel! And no soul that looks up at the Lord Jesus on the throne of God, but will see how God in His own eternity has a testimony. The One that is filling heaven, and the Light from heaven breaking through the midst of things down here, and testifying to the heart—He says: "Go with boldness right through the veil into the holiest of all, the place where God dwells, where God has expressed in His Son, sitting at His right hand, what His thoughts are of the children of men, and how only man can honour Him." He is showing out how He has met the ruined creature.

Are you walking according to God's present plan? Are

you answering God's present mind, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy"? Are you of God's mind about it, that the only thing you can give to God is your sins? The only connection that man had with the cross of Christ was his sin in crucifying Him. If I am a ruined creature, one of whom God has said, "dead in trespasses and sins," one whom Satan had in the vortex in which he turns the world, with lusts working in my heart, what can such a creature give to God? The last thing that in nature the heart is willing to give to God—his sins. Oh, give God your sins! Go in before Him, and give all that self so anxious, so restless to be doing something. Give it up to God, and do not let yourself be your centre, but God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! The throne of God is the mercy-seat; if you do not want mercy you will not go there. If God's present plan is to show Himself out, and His eternal redemption, the riches of His stores, go in for it just as you are, right into the holiest of all. And if you ever get there, I can assure you you will find that nobody shines there but the Lord Jesus Christ! *You* will not shine, not a thought, not a desire of your own; you will leave all the shining to the Lord Jesus, and you will be bright in His light.

Now to come down from the higher ground of the eternal salvation of God in heaven, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—of the light shining down—what as to one's self? "Christ died, then I am clean—not a spot within." The Lamb, the accepted sacrifice on the throne of God, where the heavenly hosts can behold Him, where the Father sees the Son in His accomplished work, and the Holy Ghost bears witness of Him. What can a poor sinner say to that? "God's mercy and love—not a cloud above!" That sacrifice has been accepted for me. Has

God met all the claims of His throne in that way? It is humility to say it, not the arrogancy of the heart of man that will originate things for himself. God has done a work by the omnipotent power of the Son of His love, and I dare not call it in question! All His character is wrapped up in it. Many are occupied with the work of the Spirit in them, and not the work of Christ for them, and the result is, that they have no peace, no holiness. Instead of saying "God has done a work, and God calls my attention to it," they turn to themselves. Conscience is like the balance of a beam, without any certainty whatever. Brahmins, Jews, Saul of Tarsus, all act according to conscience. Conscience is a poor thing. Aye, but what will God do with one who presents himself before Him without a purged conscience? Nothing! Oh, how God is saving souls to enable them to say, "Christ died, I am clean!" But, on the other hand, He comes down in testimony to the conscience—the blood of cleanness!

There are three distinct things—to take away the sacrifices, to display the perfect work of God, and that the sinner may know the place He has made manifest. The presence of the blood is one thing, the appropriation of it another thing. What is the meaning of my being washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God, but that what is there in the work of Christ before God has come down on my heart and conscience? I speak of the work of the one sacrifice. A thousand persons might stand round a light, and the effect might be on each one. The whole work is done if the Holy Ghost has stirred the conscience about the blood. What an immense effect if faith be simple! "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It is the value of the work brought, and not

the value of the faith. It is either that the sacrifice of Christ has settled the whole question, or that it never can be settled. It is done; He has sat down.

Then the effect on the heart of a believer is that he says, "By one offering perfected for ever." In what sense perfected? In what sense sanctified? People make great confusion between sanctification and purification. Sanctification is the setting apart of a thing, a person. We are put apart to walk as Christ walked, apart in body, soul, and spirit. Christ Himself was put apart, but we cannot apply "purifying" to Christ; but we are called to purify ourselves. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is that in this epistle which separates unto God. When the Red Sea flowed between Egypt and Israel, Israel was cut off from Egypt; and when the blood is known by a person it separates him from the world. Did Christ die for you, "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him"? And do you in the world live for yourself, and profess to be a Christian? Impossible. The Christian's complaint is, "I believe I am put apart; but I am not practically as apart as I should be."

Oh, the wonders connected with that expressed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, the one sacrifice never to be repeated! It not only puts the conscience in peace with God, but it forms the conscience. If He is satisfied with the blood, I will be too. In every way it has lessons. It teaches the character of the whole system of iniquity out of which I have come—teaches the enormity sin, as none but God can. It shows another thing in connection with the journey through the wilderness—the imbecility of man, and the imbecility of Satan. When all their malice came out against God, God stands by quietly, having deep counsels in His own mind. They should

slay the Lamb that was to atone for sin! What profound wisdom! What a revelation of what man is! What does it tell about all connected with the scene where man is on earth? He whose blood speaks from the throne was here once. He is up there now, and His murder rests on the earth, and calls for vengeance from God.

Oh, the contrast between Him who has shed His blood and one's self! There is something marvellous in this. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. No other man is so. What gave its effect to the blood? The very God against whom man sinned in Eden, against whom all self-will and independence have been, was the very One who executed judgment when His Son was on the cross. Without a purged conscience it is impossible to worship God in spirit and in truth. A scene where all worship goes on is where God is, and the Lamb is. Can you say, "I am there, my conscience bearing witness"? Can you say, "Christ is the accepted sacrifice, and I have staked all on Him because He cannot fail"? It is perfect peace. God rests in love with Christ there before Him, and the soul of the sinner can therefore rest on Christ.

Now we are called to act worthily of what Christ has done. If God has purged our conscience with the blood of His dear Son, we must take care not to contract stain or soil as we go through this world.

Oh, that God would act on souls so to stand as reflectors down here of that work God has done,—really, practically separated from the world, reflecting the light we get up there in Him! We are not what Pentecostal Christians were—not as to gift, but should be as to moral character and individual devotedness to Him.

can do nothing. Departure from the Word has brought him into all this, and what was there to help him out of it? God's own word; and again he is sent forth in the power and presence of God.

Remark in the 8th verse, when called to go out, by faith Abraham obeyed, and went forth, not knowing whither he went. Nothing tries and searches human nature so much as uncertainty. We cannot bear suspense (there is relief in the worst certainty); but that is just God's principle of acting with us. He does not want you to know how to face famine. He does not want Abraham to know how His promises are to be made good. His seed was to be as the stars of heaven; how was this to be, seeing he had no child? God has given him everything but that, silver and gold, flocks and herds, and three hundred trained servants. He was a man most remarkable in his day, and all seemed to say to his heart, "Who is to inherit all this?" It ever seemed to be bringing to his heart the thought that he had no children; and poor Sarah tried to smuggle a child into the house, but that was not an Isaac. The question was continually raised, "Where is your city? where is your seed?" He had to wait a long time, and it came at last by a miracle wrought by God. The very prosperity of Abraham forced him to hang on God. Who is to be the heir—the manservant? No; wait, hang upon God.

Remark that in verse 9, we have the pilgrim and stranger character kept up: dwelling in tabernacles was the mark of a stranger and a pilgrim. Tents were made for Israel in the wilderness; they did not have houses till in the land of Canaan. God's dwelling in the wilderness is a *tent*, in the land a temple. Abraham dwelt in a tent. *Lot* did so, too, at first, but he did not keep up the pilgrim

character. First, he pitched his tent towards Sodom, then sat in the gate, and had a house in Sodom. Abraham kept his tent; for he looked for a city (he knew there was such a city), and the Holy Ghost adds, "whose builder and maker is God." Remark how this man's faith was sustained. He can look above everything, counting on the promised blessing. It was a faith sustained by God's word. As heavenly pilgrims we cannot yet say we have got what we hope for; but the time is coming when we shall go right into heaven, and cease to be strangers and pilgrims down here. Is our faith set above? If God and you are keeping company, do you think He will let you have a single need unsatisfied? Oh, what a jealous God He is! What a wall of fire round about us! When He separates anyone to Himself, He plants the blood of Christ right behind them. If He has spoken to us of His glory, and told us not to mind earthly things, should not our associations be, not of ties of nature down here, but of His company, His country, His interests —waiting as people that do want to keep up their character of strangership, plainly confessing, by their walk and ways, that they are pilgrims on their way to a better country?

Even poor Jacob could not help being a pilgrim. How came Jacob to be in a condition to receive wages of Laban? Because he got off the ground of a pilgrim. He had a deal to say at the end of how long and how dreary his life had been; whilst Abraham's whole pathway is strewed with blessings, having God with him all the way through. Jacob, too, dwelt in a tent. If God has revealed Himself to your heart, and spoken to you of future glory, separating you unto Himself, He would not like you to be passing through the wildernesss "hardly bestead;" not with Jacob's experience, talking of the great things you have to give up. He does not like that. He wants you

to be like Abraham, saying, "Look at all my blessings; look how close God has set me to Himself; and see how He is going to fill all my circumstances to make me rise over all my difficulties, and make His own presence so sweet to me, that I would rather be in difficulties with Him than out of them without Him." We learn what God is by Abraham's walk.

Look, too, at Paul when moved out of everything, when in difficulties of all kinds he always had a song to the praise of God's grace. What a difference between God saying, "Here is something good for you," and your holding out your hand and taking it, and your saying that you are not good enough for what God gives you. Christ would not give Himself to us in resurrection till He had ascended to His Father. He must come down to us as the Father's gift. We can say to everything else, "That is not good enough for me." Did God's people lack power in His company to feel that He was their portion? What you must be looking out for is His gift at the present time. If anything bright offers itself (not God's gift) do not take it; it will not have sweetness; you will not find God in it. Let Him be first, and you keep behind Him. If a pilgrim, you will not be thinking of settling in houses; you will hang all your hopes on the place where the Son is. But do not take anything but God's gift to you at a moment like this. If God has prepared a city for me, should I like my mind to be absorbed by anything else down here?

Abraham refuses to touch a single thing, and the moment after God says, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." We never read of His being the God of Lot. He promised to be Abraham's God to Lot, and fetched him out of Sodom; but Lot was not in the

way to talk of Him as "my God." What! the God of a man settled in Sodom? No; but the God of pilgrims and strangers. The same unerring grace and love; but God could not blazon it abroad that He was the God of Lot in Sodom. There was no planning with Abraham. When we deal with God we cannot make a plan; we get our feet entangled. You and God must go together; there can be no planning if with God. The trial God puts Abraham to in regard to offering up Isaac is very remarkable. God tries hearts often in the same way. I do not know anything more heart-searching than this that Abraham had p ıt before him, but he left it all with God to settle all his difficulty. It was just the test whether he was hanging on God or not. Yes, he was, and he gives up Isaac. His hand was stretched out to slay him, but God came in. It was not in the heart of the Father to let tlïat father slay his son. Oh! what a feeling must there have been in Abraham, the feeling of all blessing, from first to last, being in the approbation of God Himself. Now God does try our faith in many ways. Do you know what suspense is? Do you know what it is not to see your way, and if you put forth a single thing to help yourself, does He not move it out of His way? We are kept in suspense that we may be content to wait upon God; to look to, to hang upon Him, to be so satisfied with God as to leave all to Him. To be in suspense is to be a pilgrim and a stranger, not to take anything, but to wait till God gives it. Oh! a man walking with God will have a happy, a blessed experience; otherwise there will be only sorrow and disappointment, as Lot and Jacob found.

THE PRESENT PLACE OF CHRIST.

HEBREWS xii.

THERE is a marked distinction between God's actings in old times and since the day of Pentecost. He had revealed Himself to man in man's circumstances till that day; since then He has been requiring man to come into His circumstances. The whole testimony of God now is to what Christ is in heaven; and we see the most amazing crowd of blessed things connected with Him there. People often talk of the heavenly calling as if it were but a piece of knowledge. It was not a piece of knowledge for Enoch to walk with God, for Moses to realize the power of God while leading the people through the Red Sea. God being with him, he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. We are not Christians at all, if we do not know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent; but if you do, where do we know Him but in heaven? Bethlehem, Sychar, Gethsemane, each had its record; but He is not there now, He Himself is in heaven. His human body has a locality as much as mine. If you do not know Him therefore where He is, are you Christians? He is a living Person, and has called me by name as distinctly as I have called on His name. This One, whose love was stronger than death, has surely a claim on my love in the place where He is.

God thinks it a reasonable thing for me to say, "The

Son of God gave up His life for me, and I love the place where He is." Take such a word as "accepted in the Beloved." If God's eye passes from Him to a poor weak believer such as I am, whom He has forced in the school of adversity to be satisfied, does His love rest on me as a member of Christ's body, and is it not a reasonable thing that He should expect my love to be set on Him? What a love-token from Christ was the sending down of the Spirit, when He had gone up there into heaven to receive a kingdom! In Acts vii. there was Jesus in heaven, and Stephen on earth, and all that the people knew of Jesus was what the dying Stephen told them.

We regulate our conduct by our circumstances, and that is always wrong. Would you like to do what is right in any thing? Well, what would the Lord Jesus Christ feel about it? Directly you get the thought of a perfect Son of man in heaven, occupied with His people individually, as with Stephen, every thing becomes as clear as possible to you. Looking back to failures, you will generally find they were because you settled things according to circumstances. It is not a notion, but the fact of the Son of man in heaven in the highest glory there on the throne of the Father, and He not only having the heart to enter into every thing that His people are passing through, but to make this knowledge of it a thing for the individual alone. As with Stephen, he saw this Lord of glory in heaven, and he knew that Christ's eye was upon him. Christ's heart was with him, and was Christ's eye only upon Stephen? Is it not on me too individually? I have One up there who is able to look in the face of God, to bear testimony that, according to the mind of God, there has been purgation made of sin—a Mediator for me! He could not be a "daysman" before God if there were no

one needing a daysman. If He is in the presence of God as Head of the new creation there must be a new creation.

The Lord is a reader of thoughts, as we have Him in chap. iv. But did He ever read your heart to you? He does that with His own people. They shrink from it often; feel it an awful thing to be in His presence—He taking the place of the Physician, probing the heart. He does it, just as He did it with Peter; He did it for Paul, as we see in 2 Cor. xii. But by the discovery of what we are, He makes us only the more cling to Himself and cleave to Him. Can a person go through this scene without the guiding voice of the Lord Jesus Christ? I believe not. Paul got wrong whenever he had it not. You and I must not say, "We are only little people." Little people need guidance just as much as great people. There is a living Person in heaven to-day. Do not you know Him as such? He brings you to discover that what you are is in contrast with what He is, and that you cannot trust to anyone but Himself. Circumstances, myself, and the power of Satan—these are three distinct hindrances.

The faith of most Christians comes short of the holiest of all. There the whole question of sin is looked at as settled. It is nothing but unbelief in me that would degrade Christ from the place of being the accepted sacrifice. The Lord Jesus Christ set down in heaven is the only thing for the soul to "look away to." There are a quantity of circumstances around me to distract my heart, but they are only the means of driving my heart in on Christ.

ETERNAL LIFE.

1 JOHN i. 1–4.

THERE is a remarkable connection between the different writings of John. His gospel gives us the life of the Son of God, after describing His divine glories; and almost immediately after His resurrection He disappears into heaven. The epistle then takes up the stream of eternal life that flows down from Him in heaven—the Rock of ages that was smitten on the cross. There is a connection, too, between this epistle and that to the Philippians. There we get the apostle Paul in active devoted service in suffering, giving opportunity for this eternal life to show itself; but here John takes it up, not in connection with service, but showing what this eternal life is in itself, flowing, too, through circumstances down here.

"From the beginning," a remarkable expression. In the gospel it is, "*In* the beginning," there as connected with the divine glory of the One who was the Son of God. There was a difficulty, the Spirit of God felt in writing of this subject, because "That which was from the beginning" was also the One of whom John could say, "Which we have heard, which we have seen," &c. John had not seen the divine glory in the abstract, but he had seen it in the One who was down here—God manifest in flesh. It is very important to notice in the gospel, that it is not only said that He was the Word, but also that the *Word was God.* He took the place of being the Word.

"The life that was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." God never made a revelation of Himself except through the Son, whether in creation, in the re-establishing of things after the flood, in His dealings with Israel, or afterwards with the Church. There was no medium through which the divine glory found expression save through the Son: everything that came out about God came out in the Son. (The term *word* in the Greek implies more than it conveys to our minds in English. It implies the power by which thought exists *and* flows out—all divine intelligence, and all divine manifestation of it.) People might conceive of God's taking a seraph and making a manifestation of Himself in him, but that would have been *all*. But in sending His Son we get not only the message, but the *personality of the Son*. Before the creation of the world God existed, and existed Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—ever subsisting in perfect blessedness. God is self-existent. There never was a commencement of Deity, and that is where the human mind fails. Tell me of a life that is never to end, and I can understand it; but where a self-existent One is put before me it is beyond my apprehension. Man cannot grasp an effect without a cause.

Christ was God. This is very important in the present day, when there are all sorts of false religions abroad, and when another class is making an immense effort to cast off altogether all religion. One thing is common to both. The one—infidelity—throws up its shoulder, and says it will not own a Being that is self-existent; the other says, "I own the Being, but I am perfectly competent to form my thoughts of God, and to form a system for myself." He has written a book, and if I read it with a humble heart it puts everything straight between me

and the living God. This book is the expression of One who existed in Himself before the world was. God might have sent from heaven a description of Himself; but that was not His way. No; He sent the man Christ Jesus; the babe that was born, and laid in the manger at Bethlehem. That is the One John is speaking of when he says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have *handled*"—showing how completely the Lord had been there among them. John's head had been on His bosom; He could wash their feet—"concerning the Word of life:" *of* might imply part of a thing, but this is rather *about* or *concerning*.

In verse 2, he speaks of the life itself. "The life was manifested." They had seen this Person, and in Him eternal life. The One who walked on the sea, who fasted forty days—He had got life in Himself; He had the reins of life in His hand; He could command Lazarus to come forth from the grave, and to return to the life which he had before; and so, too, the widow of Nain's son. He could command them to cast out their nets, and draw all the fish together round the ship. All was under His control. But besides this, He had life with the Father before the world was.

Turn for a moment to the source of this "living soul," the life which Adam had, and which in him was received. God spake, and there was light; but He did not tell man to come forth out of the ground. He did not make a woman start up out of Adam's side. He *took* the dust and made a man, and He *took* the rib and developed it into the form of a woman—putting special honour on man, distinguishing him from the rest of creation; and then He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living

soul. In Gen. ii., we get the scene in which this life was meant to act. (*v.* 8, &c.) Man was put into this garden to dress and keep it—made the head of the whole system. If he stood, it would stand; if he did not stand, it would not. There was everything in it the mind of man would like, just suited to his pleasure as a creature down here, working round itself. It had only to recognize God as its centre, and all would remain. How did man lose it? It is a most important question. People often speak of Satan as if he were omnipotent; but he is not omnipotent, omniscient, or omnipresent. He is a subtle spirit, who has had six thousand years to watch the heart of man; and he knows that man has a heart rebellious against God, and so he is a very awkward person for a poor, weak, guilty man to have to do with. You have only to look at his limited power, and at the stupidity of his actions, to see that it only needs a mind superior to his to overcome him. Well, how did he act? He got Eve, and presented the fruit to her. Directly she gave up the thought of subjection, the desire of self-exaltation weighed on her. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." (Gen. iii. 6.) Taking something forbidden by God, that is lust; if because it is good for food, that is, the lust of the flesh; if pleasant to the eye, the lust of the eye; or if to exalt *you*, the pride of life. She should have said, "I would rather be in a limited space than snatch at anything."

Turn to the temptation of the Lord Jesus. Satan tried Him, too, with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. He had no second principles to act on. He could not hope to move a person out

of a position, but by tempting him out of subjection to God in that position. There is a great difference between the way he came to the woman and to Christ. He went to Eve, saying, "Look at this beautiful bit of fruit; what is the taste of it?" The woman's answer should have been, "God has given me everything, and I would rather be without tasting it than turn my back on God." When Satan came to Christ he knew he was not coming to One unsuspicious of evil, but he puts things in a very different way. "This is the One that I have heard announced as the Son of God; cannot I puzzle *Him?* I will give Him a question with two points, so that if He takes one He must stumble on the other. '*If thou be the Son of God,* command these stones that they be made bread.' God does not like man to be hungry. You are hungry. What can more accord with the divine thoughts than that you should just tell these stones to become bread?" Christ looks to Scripture, and takes from Deuteronomy (the book which tells how that for Israel all blessing was dependent upon obedience), "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. iv. 4.) What can Satan do here? There is no lust of the flesh. Christ was God's servant, and was quite satisfied to let God take care of Him; so He could answer, "God can keep me alive without bread, and it is more like the Son of God to *do without* bread than to turn stones into bread for My own relief." Then Satan comes more strongly; he quotes Scripture. "*If thou be the Son of God,* cast thyself down from this pinnacle. If you are really the Person you say you are, give some visible, distinct proof. God has said that His angels take charge of you. Do this, and then it will be perfectly plain, and the whole question will be settled between us." Here is the

lust of the eye—something to *see*, and not to trust. The Lord did not want anything to see, and again draws from Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." It *is* tempting the Lord to ask for a sign when He has said, "I am with you." Satan again tries: "You shall have all these kingdoms if you will just take it at my hand." "Ah!" says Christ, "I know you. You want me to give you what is due to God alone." He has stood as quietly as the target for all the temptations to strike against; but directly Satan lets out that he is God's adversary, Christ bids him depart—"Get thee hence, Satan."

Thus Satan ever works with the mind of man, to make him exalt himself. But not so in this eternal life that we get in Christ. Everything that beats in you, that makes yourself the centre, is not of this eternal life. Everything of this eternal life puts you into connection with the Father and the Son. This life is not perpetuity of existence. The life drawn from Adam has got the poison of sin in it, and men go on feeding on things that have poison in them, and they find themselves in the place of judgment before God. The mind that man has got in fallen nature is not capable of entering into the things of God. We must have a different order of being. God has thoughts of His own.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." John says, "This is what we present to you—the Lord Jesus Christ, not now as on the cross, but as the One in the glory in whom is this eternal life and whence it comes." Have we got this eternal life, having the character of the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ? What a marvellous thing! There is a Man at the right hand of God, a Man who has been put to death, a Man

whom everybody thought contemptuously of and despised, and God has given everything in the wide universe into His hand, and He gives eternal life to His people—a life of communion with the Father and Himself. I can thus know the things of God; and when flesh and heart fail there is the One that carries me through, into the reality of what I have in Him. Often I can only comfort myself with this. I say to the Father, "*Thou* seest Christ as He is. My portion is what Thou dost apprehend about Him." I say to the Son, "Thou hast revealed God as Abba, but I have only a faint idea of it. Thy divine apprehension is the only true one." The fact that this eternal life brings out communion with the Father and the Son is the mark that it *is* eternal life. People are very fond of talking about themselves; but when I get God's thoughts and Christ's I am in a very little place. You never get the measure of sin till you have found that it is immeasurable, and you never find it immeasurable till you see God's face hidden from His Son. That death of the Son removed sin from the presence of God, so that God could act in mercy to the whole world. He knew what God's mind was, and He settled it all. I am *nowhere* when I am there. All is mine—*all*, because God and the Son are mine, and have given me the power of communion with the Father and the Son. The whole question is settled between God and Christ, and my soul can enter into the Divine Presence, and shall I go into heaven with a long list about myself, and begin, "But I"? When God has settled with His Son about sin, do I want to begin, "But I"? A strange place to bring "*I*" in! God is to be let in there—Christ is to be let in, but not *self*—in the scene where God is all in all.

TESTS OF ETERNAL LIFE.

1 JOHN ii. 28 TO iii.

HERE we get different tests applied to those who say they have eternal life and are dwelling in Christ. There is a great want of intelligence about this subject in the minds of many of the children of God. The end of chapter i. looks at man in one state, and chapter iii. in another. Chapter i. opens with a gush of eternal life from the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, with the result that it produced in the heart that received it—fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Then it notices that this life has the character of light; it does not flow into a heart without making manifest all that is in the vessel. But then we find "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." But here (chap iii.) it is looked at, not as the vessel that received it, but as what the water itself is.

Turn back to the way that grace presents itself in different forms throughout the New Testament. See the person of the Lord. None could meet Him, and feel that His eye was on them, without being sure that the question was settled between their souls and Him. They could not gaze on the Prince of Life without feeling that the answer to every question was in Himself. But after His death and resurrection, we find a further thing. On the day of Pentecost, Peter, through the Holy Ghost, stood up and proclaimed that God had taken that Jesus whom they had

crucified and slain, and had put Him at His right hand. The first feeling amongst the Jews was, "Now all the thunderbolts of His wrath will fall on us." "No," says Peter; "you plead His death, and you will get forgiveness, notwithstanding your being His murderers." The same is brought out in Romans. Man is proved utterly guilty. God says, "My Son on the mercy-seat is at once the measure of your guilt, and the answer to it." Still sin comes again and again, and we have to come for forgiveness; but Rom. vi. goes further. There is not only *sins* forgiven, but "Our old man is crucified with Him," &c. If as a sinner you are counted dead, and are to account yourself dead, do not go on sinning. In Ephesians we get it more fully unfolded, because there we get the other side. There it is, I have got entirely into another region, and if the Christ there is one spirit with me, He does not judge me as a sinner merely, but looks at me as a new creature.

What is the blessing shown out in this epistle? The Lord Jesus Christ has left the earth, and has sat down in heaven. All the Father's delight is in Him, and is shining down on His people on earth. If the love of the Father towards the Son is the centre of the new creation, and that love is in my soul, what is the effect on me? Will it draw forth the life of the flesh? No, it will draw forth the life that I have from Him, and the outgoing of that life will not be sin. What hinders people from getting into this abiding in Him? Just this, that they have not done with the old man, and are constantly thinking, "I have a certain power of my own, and can present a certain service to God." It is quite the contrary. If I have to do with Christ, I get moulded into His likeness, "changed into the same image." When battling with your

own circumstances, often "*I must*" comes into your mind. Do you find successful victory from this? No; but get, perhaps, one hour's blessed thought of God's having stepped in in atonement, met the failure, and that we are "accepted in the Beloved"—and what is the effect of this on you? The answer of the heart back to Him, and love to all who are in Him. Then everything unlike that blessed One with whom our hearts are one, we shall like to get rid of, and take up all that is of Him. "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as *He* is pure." If we dwell in that light it will make its own marks.

Verse 4 should be rendered, "Whosoever is a doer of sin is a doer also of lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness."

Verse 5. The object of God is manifested. Christ was not merely to forgive sins, but to take away the very core of sin. "In Him is no sin." Take the whole of His course, do you find a single act independent of God? It is sweet to find yourself hanging upon God, and then there will not be independence, though there may be error.

Verse 6. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not." Does this change the 1st chapter? By no means. There are three things brought out in this chapter—righteousness, love, and obedience. Verse 7. "Doeth righteousness," &c. The believer is not in a position that it could be *legal* righteousness, for he is in Christ. If I am in Christ, and if, being in Christ, all the affection of the Father flows to me in His Son, what becomes of *me* in that place? When He was here, He sought only one thing in the affections of His heart, to be a doer of His Father's will. Do I love to be a doer of His will? It is not legality, but the effect of the Spirit in a soul recognizing God in the place that belongs to Him.

Verse 8. We get it brought out with more emphasis by

the contrast. If I am really in the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ I do not sin. If instead of abiding in Him, I take my place as alive in the flesh down here, I need an Advocate with the Father: both passages stand. It is a very important question nowadays, when there is so much knowledge, who is a doer of God's will. In the middle of verse 10, he takes up *love*, and here again will not admit of a less standard than the heart of Christ Himself. Did you ever get into communion with Christ Himself, and find how everything in Him condemns everything in you? He is sitting up there as the expression of all that is delightsome to God in a man. As the blessed Son on earth He met everything according to His Father's mind. He passed under the law, fulfilling it perfectly, and in His death and resurrection did the whole work that opened heaven. So He requires His people to be righteous *as He is righteous*, and so when it is a question of love it is as "*He* laid down His life for us." If there be hatred, take care that it is hatred of the world against you because you are in Christ, not from you to a brother.

Verse 17. If you shut your heart from your brother how does the love of God dwell in you? We want not to be distinguished by opinions, but to have the life of God in the soul made known by its bringing forth fruit.

Verse 19. The effect of this is the assurance of our hearts before Him. It is wonderful, the effect of doing the truth in assuring our hearts before Him. The believer can say for certain, "Christ is in the Father, I in Him, and He in me." Well, if He has done all this, He says, "Do not now turn round to the flesh, but walk as my Son walked."

Paul did not go on as if he had water in his vessel to go on upon; he knew he had Christ, and from Him a spring

of water ever flowing in. So with us, if we try to *spend* merely, and forget that the life is flowing in, we must necessarily come to a close. Are our hearts in the presence of God? Then practical failure does not in the least shake our heart. We may be broken down because of self-confidence. If you trust to yourself, you will be brought low, like Peter; but he could come before Christ, for he *knew* He loved him. What do your hearts condemn you of? Is it "God is greater than your heart," and something covered over? Or is it not rather that you have taken your own place of fallen nature? God has put you in Christ, and sees you in Him. If you get occupied with your difficulties, or with the evil around, you are sure to get under their power. Leave it all, and get occupied with Himself. If the heart knows the love of Christ, the *costliness* of that love, it becomes a mighty good. What can be done to tell Him we own His love? It is unutterably sweet to feel that He has saved us to have us in communion with Himself; saved us to walk in His footsteps here; saved us to live in our little measure on the very principles He lived upon, when down here doing the great work of God. If your heart does condemn you for some failure, God says, "I do not see you as imperfect in My sight." We may be brought under the Father's judgment in His house. It is very blessed to have One who has His eye on His children down here, One who will not let us deceive ourselves. When would you have an hour's peace if you did not know that the only answer to the hypocrisy of your nature is the faithfulness of God? You would deceive yourself to a certainty if you were left alone.

In verse 22, we get a character of communion connected with what goes before, the position of being receiver going before Him. I want to receive from Him. Does it cause

surprise to the mind of Christ that those God has put in Him come before Him to receive? *None.* There is a power found by us in communion in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we get into His presence in that Name we find Him a living Person there. In all these tests, who is it that tests? And what is His mind? Is it to discourage the heart? Is it a *strange* thing if He has taken you, and put you into the Son of His love, and put you forth as a testimony in this world, to have Him as One that watches you? No; it is a blessed thing. God never supposes that we could go through life without Him, or get into glory without Him.

THE SERVANT AS ILLUSTRATED IN ST. JOHN.

REVELATION i.

WE get here the servant as illustrated in John. It is remarkable how complete are the writings of each apostle, each saying all he has to say on his own peculiar subject. So the Revelation forms the complement to the gospel and epistles of John. Eternal life is his subject, and to complete it he must needs show how the power of Christ will set all in order down here. In the gospel we get life in Christ, Christ the life-giver; in the epistles life flowing from a risen Christ through the believer; and in Revelation how He will displace all that is not subject to God in heaven and on earth. In the gospel John's service is that of one chosen, and called, and set apart to write of the Son of the Father as the communicator of divine life. He could not exhaust what he had to say of his divine Master. The gospels give the character of Christ, and are of eternal value; and when the Church is gone they will be as valuable still to the earthly people. Not so the epistles, which are more directly the portion of the Church.

There is a difference in the introductions of the three, and in the place in which the Lord is presented. In the gospel of John we get the blessed Lord presented in person on the earth. In his epistles He has left the earth, and gone into heaven as the Rock of ages in whom

all blessing is found. Revelation fills up the gap to the end. It is here God's delight in His servant Jesus Christ shining down over the path of His servants in their sorrow.

In the beginning WAS the Word; before creation *He was.* And *who* was that Word? God. Where? With God. To English ears "Word" does not convey the full idea. The Son of God was the One through whom everything expressed by God came forth. But the Greek means more; viz., that which is in the mind, the nucleus of intelligence which produced the word, as well as its expression. That blessed One is seen throughout the gospel on earth, and John His servant traces out those parts of His glory necessary to explain His position as Son of God there. The sweetness of the gospel is in our getting there so much of the Father's love. Turn to the epistles to see the smitten Rock giving forth its living waters to a people down here. They open with fellowship with the Father and with the Son, which could not be understood, save as He is risen and ascended, and sat down at God's right hand, and that we have received the Spirit of adoption. The epistles deal with the application of divine life as seen in the soul of the believer.

Revelation gives quite a different line of truth. It is not enough, that hearts of individuals should be moved with wonder at the person of the Lord Jesus Christ seen on earth, or should understand what they have in Christ so as to have fellowship with the Father and the Son. But here on the earth, with girded loins, the servant must know the fellowship of the sufferings of His Son. Here is John thrown out of all service and association with Christians, alone in Patmos, apart from all that had been

a comfort to him. Here is John cut off from all he might take sweet counsel with, yet everything is stamped with the character of service. No Patmos for John, no Revelation for us. We are accustomed to measure service by what we call fruits, and we connect fruit with what can be seen. John's service was not such; it was simply doing what God had given him to do. So with my character as a servant of God. Am I a servant? Can my Master make a mistake? Have I committed faults? and cannot my Master set them right? Keep up the place of obeying God under all circumstances, knowing that while serving Him, everything, even failure, shall work together for good. I can speak with divine certainty, if you are an obedient servant, that you are where God has put you. All must go right because your Master is there. But I have failed. I say to Him, "Master, I have failed, and must leave all things to Thee." Confess all to God, leave all in His hand, and serve Him still.

"I John who am your brother," &c.—leave out the "also," it spoils the sense, for he is taking the low place of being, not an apostle raised above others, but "your brother," one of many. Tribulation is with the believer an afterfruit, and a blessing. A glorified Christ is given him for his joy and privilege first, and he is introduced into the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, whether waiting down here or waiting with Him there. There is something sweet in the thought that it is the patience of Jesus Christ. It is from want of remembering this that trouble is so like a galling fetter. When the yoke is laid on the shoulder, we do not say it is the yoke of Christ, and the patience of the Lord Jesus Christ. The testimony of Jesus Christ, too, is worth speaking of everywhere, and it is a precious thing to us. If there were a bolder testimony by

the children of God, even an individual one to the Lord as the Head of all power, the humble Christian would meet much more of the mockery of the world than he does. It would be saying that you have no right to think yourself your own, everything has been given by God to His Christ, though Satan may have usurped it. It was this which emphatically roused the hatred of the Jews against Christ—"Art *thou* the King of the Jews?"

Is it not worth leaving all for Him? The men of the world would say, "The Princess Alexandra may well leave her home and her country to be wedded to the heir-apparent of England, though his position is only one of hope." We must make up our minds to trouble and patience where the Lord Jesus Christ was rejected. It is a solemn thought, as standing on earth, that He who has sat down in heaven, in whom all the fulness of spiritual blessings in heavenly places is made our own, that He has to claim both the earth and the heavenlies, which are now under the power of darkness; that we are standing on the earth where He was rejected, to be servants according to the thoughts of God, holding forth the word of life, loins girded, patient in tribulation, and quietly waiting.

God ever acts out certain things in certain persons to help our faith and understanding; and they become the type and example of all who are to follow after in the same place. Thus Stephen was taught, amid the storm of stones falling on him, that there is a Son of man in heaven, who had a heart for him and for the people down here who follow Him. See also Saul: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me?*" Here is shown out that the Lord Jesus reckons Himself one with His people on earth.

In Rev. i. we do not get the Lord showing Himself in connection with the work. John was in it; he got into

deep trial as a servant, and the Lord came to show him His interest.

Verse 10: "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's-day," the same word as that used in connection with the Lord's supper. He was in ecstacy on the Lord's-day. The voice of the trumpet announces the dignity of the Person who was about to speak to His servant. The text of this book is very different from that of other parts of the Bible. At the time of the Reformation no copy in the original was to be found, and the translation was made from the Latin. Only recently has a trustworthy Greek copy been discovered. Satan did not like this book; for there is none which treats so of his overthrow. Hence he kept it back as long as possible. Sometimes therefore the sense is marred by words put in. Leave out, in verse 11, "first and the last." In this book God has told me of things to come, sending a stream of light right on to the end, showing that what God is in shall triumph, though now trampled on, and that whatever God is not in shall come to nought. Nothing makes a man so thoroughly a pilgrim and a stranger as the light of God upon his circumstances, and the place where he stands. No book opens up God's thoughts about things on earth like this. The sort of inspiration of it was different too. In other parts, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" with John here the message was given him by the Lord. The source whence the knowledge flowed was God Himself, and from Him, like "thus saith the Lord," we get the light which shines out all round about us. And nothing like having His thoughts can keep His people from evil.

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written

therein." There are two classes of hearers. By the seven times repeated word, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," I am justified in applying the Revelation to any one of you. However weak and feeble a person may be, if he be full of the word of God he will be a messenger from God to man; he will become the vessel in which the divine wisdom and power are revealed. There is something remarkable in the Lord holding so central a position "in the midst of the lamps." Did you ever compare the dress—habiliments of the Lord with those of the high priest, either as in the Old Testament, or as referred to in Hebrews? Compare, first, these two together, and then both with what is said here of Christ as the Visitor of the churches. It is not the dress of a person with much work to do, or of one going to offer a sacrifice, or of one about to run a race. Flowing robes would not suit these. The position of the girdle also is not one for strength, as if about the loins. *Golden* girdle—gold points to what is strictly divine in the tabernacle. Then comes the same glory as that of the Ancient of days in Daniel—"His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." When light is perfectly free from earthly mixture it is white, the smallest earthy particle in a flame colours it. White robes in those who are brought near to the Lord show that there is nothing earthy left. The One through whom God gives His word is clothed in essential purity. "His eyes were as a flame of fire." There is the light again; those eyes can read everything. When they look down into your heart, and on your work, every motive starts out into prominence. "His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace"—essentially pure passing through all. "His voice as the sound of many waters." Nothing has a more

absorbing power than that of much water falling; it can be heard in the stillness of the night miles and miles away. A soothing sound, but one that carries with it the idea of irresistibility. "In His right hand seven stars." He holds the testimony. Why must there be testimony? Why should I not pass my time merely enjoying His beauties? Had He lighted those stars only for the pleasure of His people here, or for God? All testimony is in connection with God His Father. "Out of his mouth a two-edged sword"—the power of that was used against Satan so as to throw him back in each attack. "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." Nothing more expressive of majesty and glory, and there is nothing sweeter than the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

People are not generally prepared for Christ searching through all they have done. If you knew grace and mercy in the person of Christ, you would be so full of what He has done, that you would not think about yourself. Wherever there is a shrinking from the light of Christ playing upon everything within us, there is a want of knowing what He is. If all has been judged, why wish to hide even a little bit? Lost, and saved by Christ, let Him speak and say of me what He likes. I am satisfied to leave myself in His hands. Oh, how the low, vile feeling of mistrust creeps up about us! Saints are not accustomed to have the candle of the Lord brought right into all the circumstances and necessities of their lives. See the effect of it here on John. There, where the weakness of the disciple becomes most painful, there the heights and depths of the grace of the Lord shine out most brilliantly. John fell at His feet as dead. I should not be sorry to see more of that sort of feeling in saints. It was not strength, but it

was a blessed thing so to have the glory of the Lord brought right into the conscience, even to the overwhelming of the poor earthen vessel. "He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not"—as in the transfiguration.

Am I a servant? and God has sent to see how my service is going on. What answer have I? What is the answer? If I am made a light-bearer, I am under the hand of Him who understands the glory of God. *He* cares for the lamps who lighted them. Did you seek the Lord before He sought you? Nay; before the foundation of the world He had chosen you; and as to any service, who put it into your hand? The self-same Master, and chief Servant of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. He lighted the lamps that God might have a light in the dark world. And we shall not have the happy liberty of children if there be not a spirit of service in us. Oh, let in the light into your souls! Cultivate the inshining of that light of the perfect Servant of God, who, if He has given you light at all, has done it in connection with the testimony. He says, "I have set you in a place of light where you cannot walk independently of Me." But where is the fruit of the testimony? At the time of the Reformation, Christians lost the sense of responsibility to the light; they thought of the amazing blessing they had got, and not of the manifestation of the life. It is an individual thing, however, and we must not judge each other according to our own light. So the path before you, that path which Christ has traced out, and for which He has given you light to act. Let the light into your souls: it comes in grace from Christ, but you will have no strength as it shines in, unless you connect it, as here, with the person of Christ, "the First and the Last"—that magnificent glory of His own so suited to the drooping

condition of His servant. For myself I can have nothing to say for what my walk has been. I thank God for His patience and grace, and earnestly look to Him for the time that remains, that He may brighten up my own soul in the understanding of the desire of the Holder of the stars that we should bear fruit; and knowing this, that the purpose of our hearts may be right.

A question often arises about usefulness. Satan often beguiles by it. He may have suggested to John that he would be more useful if he were to compromise a little, and keep out of trouble for the sake of being free for his service to saints. Useful to whom? To God or to men? God may be able to show out more of His glory by laying men aside. The eyes of God rested on Paul a prisoner, seemingly useless (not even always allowed to write), as the field for the display of some of the greatest privileges of truth. The very point when your weakness seems to make you useless is often the very way in which God shows forth His glory. People think it strange that old Christians, useless ones, &c. &c., should be left, and young active ones taken. Do not you be trying to settle God's house for Him; do not say, "What a pity for John to get to Patmos." The Lord wanted him there to communicate something that might serve His people to the end of time. A person may be in difficult circumstances, and you may have it in your power to get him out of them in the power of human nature. And you may do it, and find out that God would have had him in them, because then he could have borne testimony; and you ought not to have measured things by your love for him and your comfort, but by the light of God. We often act on a set of thoughts of which the cord is bound to our own humanity instead of God's glory.

THE GLORY OF REDEMPTION.

REVELATION i. 5, 6; iv. v.

I HAVE read these scriptures as presenting to us the glory of redemption, and judgment as beginning directly the servant of God has got into it. (Chap. i. 5, 6.) In addition, a thought closely connected with it; and that is, the thought of the grace learnt down here in the wilderness. The two clauses found at the end of verse 5, and filling up verse 6, present the grace which John saw at the time when it burst forth from his lips, through realizing what the wilderness was through which he had to go, and what the grace which his own soul had been made to taste through the Christ then and there revealed to him. (*vv.* 5, 6, &c.)

"Unto Him that loved us," &c. I want to open up that a little, first of all as connected with the saint in a very remarkable and blessed way; and then as being the song that the men of this world, never having known Christ, are entirely ignorant of. When the Lord removes those who have learnt in the wilderness how to glory in the fulness found in Him, they will go to glory, and see the redemption sphere of glory as their place, and the very Lord they had learnt down here as Heir to all this glory, opening the seals of judgment on the wicked, those who had despised His grace and His beauty. People very often evade their own position in the world. Do you do that?

I speak specially to the children of the saints. Your conduct may be lovely and amiable, nothing much to object to, brought up by godly parents—how shall I reach you? However much those who have brought you up may comfort themselves by your orderly walk, if you have not tasted what John did, have you tasted that love in Christ, or have you not tasted it? If you have not individually, for your own self, tasted what Christ does for the people of His love, as one of those of whom John could speak as *us*, you have neither part nor lot in the matter. If you have not tasted His love as associating you with His people down here, if Christ took you up into the glory, there would be nothing in the scene in which you could find your delight, nothing for you to find your home in—real scenes of beauty and glory to those who are His.

Now I turn to the song of John. Here I would only remark in every way it was a wilderness song. When John looked about him, and weighed the character of that scene, the effect of the light was that he felt he really was in the wilderness. He had laboured to build up the saints, to feed them, and a rude hand had shut him up in Patmos. That too made him feel it. There was everything to bring it home to his heart that he was not *at home*, but a pilgrim and stranger.

Verse 5. All the titles connected with divine glory are everyone of them distinct from the revelation of the truth which formed the Church of which the apostle John was a member. There was everything to the heart of John as a servant to make him feel he was a stranger; but directly he sees the Lamb, the blessed Lord, the stream of His love filling his heart, he turns back in praise. He saw the Lord, and his heart responded in worship and adoration—"Unto Him that loved *us*." John right well knew what

had been the experience of this company, and every saint to the end of time can say, "Loved *us*." He puts the Lord there in the first place as the One who had bestowed such unspeakable blessing upon him that he can say, "Unto *Him*," &c. That thought about the Lord Jesus Christ, would it waken up in the hearts of unbelievers such songs as these? When the thought of God comes up before the soul that has not learnt His grace in the wilderness, they say, "Do I love Him? Can I appear before Him?"—like Jacob searching among the stuff for the false gods before he goes up to worship. That would never have done for John, such questioning of his love to the Lord. He *saw* the Lord in a vision, and that was the Person who had loved him, and his heart was full of love. "I am going to do all these things, and shall not I tell John? Shall not I let My love come out in confidence to My people, and tell them what I am going to do?" He loved the Church.

I will just remark in this song of praise that the beloved of the Christ of God are marked. What did Christ see when He looked on me? when He applied His blood? Sin, and nothing but sin. The first thought of Christ when He looked on Saul of Tarsus was, "I see something there to shut out that person for ever from God's presence. The only thing that characterizes him is sin. If I do not apply the blood he never will have boldness to look God in the face." I ask, Are those your thoughts when looking upon Christ—nothing but sin? A doctor of this world does not want people who are well. When Christ sees sin in a sinner, does He say, "I must pass that one by, and look out for those who think they are good"? It was not like Him to pass by those who thought themselves sinners. He loved them, and He

washed them. Christ knew all about the blood; knew where the blood came from. He gave that blood. There was atonement and there was cleansing, and He applied it to every one that entered into that little word "*us*," and applies it in the wilderness, and it begins with His loving us.

Granted that every child of God knows that he has the value of the blood applied to him, and sees the heavenly side of it, and that he says, "Oh, yes, I have forgiveness of sins!" But have you got it mingled with all your thoughts down here? Or do you say, "I have not got at what Paul's thought was about that blood?" It is not a question of our learning, but a question of Christ's washing. Christ saw sin on our consciences, and Christ knew how to apply the blood. I defy the judge who sits in judgment on Christ's work; it is as perfect as He who has created and who governs the world could make it. He has done it for my poor little self as a member of this little company, as one whom He loved. Christ applied the blood without any leave given Him by Paul. It is not one corner washed, and it is not the whole body washed badly, but all washed perfectly from all sin. All He sees now is the blood; and we are washed completely—whiter than any fuller can whiten. We can draw near with this crown, with redemption applied to our souls, and we can draw near with perfect boldness before the throne of God. Then what have we got of our own? Nothing. That which justifies God justifies us. It was not His mind only to remove a part of our sin: the whole judgment was borne by Him, and the value of this is brought to bear on the soul of every saint. We know His intervention for us in our misery, and He has cleansed us from all our sins. As a child by adoption, all the glory of sonship is communi-

cated to me. There were certain parts of the glory He could not impart to us, though we get the benefit of it. All the love that the Father has caused to rest upon Him, and the glory too, He means to rest upon us—to share them with His people.

John had nothing of his own. Well, what are you? I am of the royal priesthood. *You* a priest! You do not look much like it. No; but it is mine, given me by Christ. I am a king and a priest, and praise flows forth. There are two things in that song. The first is, if I had been there and heard John saying that, I might have said, Do you really mean, John, that you wished that? "*Indeed I do.* To find the One I delighted in, in power before God, I have sympathy in His exaltation." John's delight in this, "To Him be glory," was no mere piety, but the Spirit of God guided him, when in his pilgrim state he ascribed "dominion and glory" to the One God had just appointed for it. Put Him out, and somebody else in, and all my hopes are touched. I want to praise Him. Does the heart brought up nicely in educational religion see its felt need is to put in something about *Himself?* When I get near to Christ, in the sense of all my need being met, all His fulness as far as it could be put on me, I want to ascribe praise to Him. It is the felt want of the heart to put in something about Himself, *some praise.* Do you say, I cannot praise? Can you not? No praise could be sweeter than "Unto Him that loved us." Simple praise is a description of what Christ has done for you. You do not need to bring in all the high sounding words and nicely rounded periods in connection with praise. The heart that has learnt its lesson in the wilderness, says, "The Lord Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father; He is the One who is the Head of the Church;

He is the One who has given the Holy Ghost; the One who has shed His blood, and carried us in there that the Father might let His love flow out. Besides all this, when He comes to me individually, He washed me and made me a king and a priest to His God." And that was learned by John in the wilderness—the sweetness of having this Christ as the delight of his heart down here.

Well, but about the glory? Chap. iv. and v. John was caught up into heaven to behold these magnificent scenes of glory, but where is there one single thing in that iv. and v. chapters, of which a graceless sinner, if caught up, could say, "I feel at home there?" No, he could not say that; it would be terrible to him to be in that light. It is the secret of being associated with Christ; the delight of finding your home in that scene—of being at home. There I want to open all that is my own before Him. The question is, Are you at home, a saved sinner that has tasted grace? Have you such sympathy with Christ, that if He is exalted you are perfectly happy? What are they all about? The glory of God and the Lamb, what do you know about Him? Nothing there for you; what comfort would you find in it? None. What joy is it to you to see the glory of the Lord God Almighty? None whatever. John is up there, and sees everything bringing out that beautiful scene just fitted for one who has learned grace in the wilderness—a glory formed by God for the express purpose of setting forth all the divine glory that belonged to the Lamb. This is the power that ministers to the saint that has learnt grace in the wilderness.

Chap. iv. 10. "Their crowns." What were they? A rightful privilege given to be worn before everyone's eyes as a witness to their right to be kings and priests. The thought of a crown can meet the mind of man in nature;

but "casting them down" seems a strange thing—to throw off the emblem of association with the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is not strange to the heart that knows the Lord Jesus, that knows God. When He brings us into the glory, will it be a word of command to cast our crowns before Him? Will it not be in perfect harmony with the wilderness lesson taught here? It will be a word springing from the very depths of the heart. All secure for Him, all secure for us, because He has undertaken our cause. He made us rich; He made us clean; we have got home out of the wilderness. In chapter iv., it is all the glory of Jehovah-el-Shaddai, not the Lamb upon the throne, because He wanted it to be seen that all His acts and counsels were executed by the Lamb.

Chap. v. 3, 4, 7. What does the Lamb do? He goes, and takes "the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne." That Person is the Lamb, and has a right to be crowned as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Why did He go and take the book? Because He wanted to communicate to His servant John, and His servants down here, what would take place after the rapture of the saints—the destinies of the earth down to the end. Oh, how blessed for John and *us*—His servants. "I want to show to My servants, those practically in the world, those who serve Me, all the reserved secrets of God." What honestly, in truthfulness, could any person say about himself if he has not tasted Christ's love in washing him from his sins? He would say about Christ, "I am sure He does not want to show these secrets to me. If that is true of John's company, I am not of that company." And why are you not of the company? Have you got anything but sin? God says, "I have a fountain open; My Son is a Saviour, and He needs sinners to show forth

His love in grace." When Christ comes, having loved His own unto the end, He finds His people in mortal bodies, and many of them wanting resurrection. If I appear there on the ground that Christ has not forgotten His promises, I shall not be ashamed. I shall appear before Him in a glorified body like His own. That blood has made good all claims in heaven above, and I shall not be ashamed. I can never be ashamed to go into His presence by faith.

Verses 9, 10. Now remark one thing. It is a very different song which burst forth from the elders from that which came from John in the first chapter. This explains the worthiness of the One who could take the book. In chap. i., it is John in the wilderness, in Patmos. If a man has learnt in the wilderness what Christ has done, when he gets into the glory he will find he can sing. I shall exalt Him in every possible way. Who could go and take the book of God's revealed secrets? *The Lamb.* Who can rejoice in redemption? No person can enter into the mercy displayed in redemption but the person who is redeemed. The servants could not enter into the joy of the prodigal. It is a question of the compassions of God pouring down upon the heart of one who is fitted for grace. I have got a Father, such a Father; He knows how to break me down with His goodness. The Father and he understood it in a way the elder brother, and others could not, the joy that comes with redemption. God looks at souls in pure compassion on their estrangement from Him. The elder brother had set his heart on his father's *things.* "I had marked that calf for myself, sir, and you gave it to celebrate the return of my prodigal brother." That is his estimate of his father, and that is what man's thought is of God. Our first thought is, What can I get for myself? Ah! but when grace

comes in, God has a right to say, "I can get glory in a poor sinner." There is something very humbling to a soul, beloved friends, in that word *redeemed* (redemption here is the word for purchase). Do you know you are bought with a price? What does a Christian say? "Ah! I am bought with a price, a goodly price. I do not belong to myself, and I own it." If I look at Christ, I can enter into the thought of redemption, I enter into it with joy; I own that He has bought me with a price, that is a very humbling thing to human nature. You must be satisfied to be as clay taken up by the potter; but He only can form it for Himself. What an evidence of the truth of Christianity. It puts God up there in glory, and it puts a sinner down lower than the human mind can imagine, and yet he has boldness in the day of judgment, and in Christ he has the measure of what his completeness is in the presence of God. I defy any Christian to say that he has measured the wrath due to his sin in the sight of God. Has he measured the blood of Christ? You cannot measure it. You can say, "God knows it, knows the worth of it; but if my measure of my unworthiness is my measure of the blood of Christ, I must give it up." You never can measure it so as to comprehend what it was. Man has got his pleasure, and is not God to have His pleasure? He has His thoughts and counsels about the Church. They began before man was, before the foundation of the world, and many of us are witnesses that God has been and is working—we have the witness in our own souls when we are brought into the Father's house. Redemption is His work, the salvation in which it will issue when the sons of God are brought into the new Jerusalem—that is *pleasure to Him.*

THYATIRA.

REVELATION ii. 18.

THESE epistles to the churches are divided into three and four. The first three and the last four go together. The difference is marked by the place of the exhortation: "He that hath ears to hear," &c. This epistle to Thyatira is the first of the last four. In *Ephesus* we get the failure of the Church in forsaking its first love, Christ as the eternal Lover, and that love known by faith; but they had forgotten it, and He could not be satisfied with anything save their love. When there is love, it cannot be satisfied to find in the object of its love coldness and indifference. *Smyrna* brings out how, when there is failure in first love, Christ meets the difficulty. He lets in a terrific persecution to stop the progress of the evil. If a saint, or a company of saints, get into ease and forgetfulness of the love of Christ, He kindles the fires to touch that which is holding them back—the flesh—and to throw them back upon the Lord. *Pergamos* gives us corruption let in through the doctrine of Balaam and that of the Nicolaitanes.

In Thyatira we get an awful picture—a strong appeal on God's part to His saints. People say, "We do not see any strong appeal on God's part." Then your ear is stopped. All these calls remain in the power of the love of the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ for every person down to the end of time—for everyone who says, "I have heard

the voice of my Beloved, who will not be satisfied till my walk is responsive to His heart." The insignia He takes here are very peculiar; "the Son of God," a title above all; bringing out what He is essentially as well as the immutability of His character. Having saved a people, and brought them into a position of responsibility, never could He give up the question of their responsibility.

"Who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire." We get the same thought in Heb. iv. There it is you have got a great High Priest, and when you come to Him He will read to you, and to you only, what is in your heart. It is love, not to the world but to His own people. His is an eye that searches and makes everything manifest. A flame gives us the idea of something rising; but it need not be so always; it may be as a sunbeam coming down like a sword of light, making manifest all that lies hidden in a dark valley. Take any brilliant light and turn it, say, on a garden; it will disclose everything that is in the garden. When the eye of the Lord comes down (He is up there in pure light), it discovers everything; and when He looked at Thyatira in that character, He said, "I will let you know how *I* read things."

"His feet like unto fine brass." In the tabernacle there were three metals used. *Gold*, which always figured divine glory; *silver*, which had to do with the title of the Son of God as born of the Virgin, the Son of the Highest; and *brass*, which figured Him as the Son of man displayed among men. The silver in the tabernacle was connected with quite different things from the gold, and so also the brass. We get the brazen altar—a *Man* is my substitute. "God manifest in the flesh" it is true, but a Man. The Gnostic says that it was a phantom that hung on the cross; but that takes away all peace. It will not do to say that

God took an appearance on the throne. The Man who took His place in heaven was the Man who hung upon the cross. He was Man actually, in body, soul, and spirit. "His feet like unto fine brass," &c. Whatever the ways of man in connection with Him on earth, He was thoroughly prepared for it, and went right through it. And now, as Head, He thoroughly understands all about it. He can come and deal with me, and bring out all about me. He can take us up, and say, "You have to go on a thorny path; but I tread down the briers before you. I will go through the furnace before you, and be to you exactly what you want."

"The Son of God, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire" (making manifest), "and His feet like fine brass," says, "I know thy works"—love, faith, service, patience, &c., "and the last to be more than the first." This is a very remarkable expression; there were not many churches to which He could say that. Was the state of the assembly then very good? No; the state of the whole was such that He had to take up a remnant. (*v.* 24.) It shows a bad state when even inside the Church, every one that nameth the name of the Lord is called upon to depart from iniquity. (2 Tim. ii. 19). We have come to that in the present time. Infidelity quietly tosses Scripture aside; superstition buries it! Are things getting better? My conviction is that the time is now come when you must either walk with God, or go with the stream—constrained, if you want to keep your conscience in purity before God, to say, "I have got my cross on my shoulder, and I must go to heaven after Christ; if others go with me, well; if not, I must go without them." Christ says, "I cannot say the whole mass at Thyatira, but 'if *any man*,'" &c. He recognizes the extreme of weakness, the body as a body

corrupted. All I can do is to give the exhortation. Let people save themselves if they cannot save anybody else."

There is a remarkable difference between this church and Pergamos. There it was Balaam, the son of Beor, from Pethor, in Mesopotamia; *i.e.*, he was from beyond the Euphrates. He was not a Jew, nor a good man either; he was a wicked man, though the power of God's testimony was with him, so that he could not but speak the word of God. Yet his heart was set on gold. Sent for to curse the people God delighted in, he goes; but when he gets there he finds God too strong for him, and he cannot curse them. If God takes up anything, the question becomes, Was He justified in taking it up? He takes care of what He does Himself. Ask Him if He is justified in taking up Israel or the Church, and He will say, "Yes, I will be just, and the Justifier." When a charge is brought against that which God has taken up, what is the first question? Is it, Are they walking consistently? No; it is, Is God justified in having taken them up? All Balaam could do was to raise the question. God says, "That is a question against Myself. I will meet it." What did Balaam do? Like Satan himself, he says, "If this way will not do, I will try another way. If you can get this people to do what God does not like He will break them up. He insists on purity—you get in fornication, you will have them smashed up and forsaken!"

Could there be anything more Satanic? Yes, there was Jezebel. Balaam was but a stranger brought in to try what he could do against a people of whom he was not one; he was outside them, though he was identified with the one who wanted to curse them. Jezebel was worse—she was brought inside, because connected with the person put by God to take care of His people, and she had

children inside. This was far worse. Balaam said, "We cannot change them; let us spoil them;" but this was nothing like Jezebel being brought in, and giving the sanction of the king's name to the false worship inside the house of God. God recognized Balaam as a prophet; but of her He says, "Thou sufferest thy wife" (not woman merely) "Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess." What brought her in and made her queen, putting her in a place of government? There is something very remarkable in the meaning of the words. Here Balaam means "no people" (giving the idea of desolation); Beor means "consumption;" Jezebel means "no dwelling" (desolation in another form), patronized by Baal, the abomination of false gods. Christ says, "You have confessed Me as your Saviour; I hold you responsible."

My conviction is, that if we live down here ten years longer, we shall find a line traced of people walking as those who have God dwelling in them, and who are dwelling in God, and no other line whatever—infidelity everywhere else. The break-up there depicted, is in principle working now. We find that people do not mould their walk on the fact that Christ has been here, and now is in heaven. If false standards corrupt the soul, and mine is a false standard, not only am I not on a right level, but I am on that which corrupts my soul. But if I go where Christ is, all is open. *I* do not know what is in *me*, but I have an open bosom before Him, and I can know what is in His heart towards me. He in heaven says to me, "I laid down My life for you; I came off the throne of God to do it; I have gone back to heaven, and there have talked of you, cared for you, and I am coming again to fetch you." What sort of a person ought you to be? And do you say, "Do not be too particular, do not be too particular?" "Are you

surprised that I am making claims on you? It was no little love led Me to die for you, no little love led Me to go into heaven before the hosts of darkness, and talk about you." If Christ's love is before you, do you not say, "How strange that He should so love me, care for me, that not a word of my lip, not a thought of my heart, but He loves me so that He likes to have all in me according to His own mind"?

Verse 25. There He is putting a soul in the position of having received a deposit from Him. You have received this; now clutch it, hold it fast. My mind is not occupied with evil only—I noticed the good first—now hold it fast. What are you and I doing? Have we got the truth that has made us free? Then are our faces towards the glory where He has gone? Are we holding His words on to the end? "He that overcometh," &c. It is not a very high promise, but there is a great principle involved in it. In looking at each promise, we find that the Lord picks out the only thing that will help them out of the difficulty in the state of things they are in. Here He had been speaking of the evil brought into Israel by Balaam and Jezebel. So in the Church of the living God, where the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ought to have been the subject of testimony, corruption from the Gentiles had come in. Hence we get the promise, "I will give him power over the nations;" or, taking the essence of it, "I, Jesus, am not only the only One who brought in good, but the only One who will triumph over evil. Have I given you an ear to hear, and have I not given you a good thing? When I come to triumph over evil, you will like to be with Me. Another time is coming when I shall be victorious over all, and I mean you to be with Me." What special love! Shall I not take care not to identify myself with the evil He is coming to

put down? Would you like, when He comes to judge the evil of the nominal church, to be found to have been identified with the spiritual corruption? No, I should not. I should like to be found outside it all.

Verse 27. "Even as I received of my Father." He says to each individual, "Not only shall you come forth among the invincibles, but you will like to be identified with Me when I take the things given Me of My Father; not merely as in a place of power, but that part of the glory connected with Me as delighted in by My Father." The Father delights in Him, and there is no glory that will not put a crown on the head of Christ. "The glory which thou gavest Me I have given them." As if He said, "He has given Me a throne; you shall sit there with Me. I have got to come and put down My enemies; you shall share the glory with Me." Oh, what a thought! When you think of what you *were*—born in sin, shapen in iniquity, children of wrath, so that *nothing* but the death of Christ could break the bonds of sin, and save you from eternal death; and of what you *are*—poor stupid things, rebelling against the grace of God, and *then* to think of such things as you were, pitiful things as you are, being identified with the Lord when He comes in the triumph of His power. What should the effect of this be on our life now?

"I will give him the morning star." It is one thing to watch for the morning star, another thing to *have* it. I shall not *have* the morning star till I enter into the thoughts of God, that this Son of His love should have a bride, and that all honour must be His, and that the Father's delight is in Him. Some manna was put by in a pot before God, as if He said, "I will not only give My Son as manna in the wilderness, but *I* delight in the thought of

Him, and I will put some before Me to show that I know how to take care of My people." Christ, as the manna down here, feeds me. Christ, as the manna amongst God's treasures, shows God's delight in Him. Christ, as the morning star, will appear in the right time, and the Church will be wafted home; but to possess the morning star is now to see God's delight in it. Christ will not be ashamed of His Church. He will not bring her in at the back-door. He will say, "I have got a companion in glory, and I am not in the least ashamed of her."

Then He winds up with the exhortation, "He that hath an ear." The body as a body will not have an ear; but there may be some *one* heart reached by that promise. These are critical days we live in, a day where there is no standing still; as in climbing a precipice, if you sit down to rest, you will at once slide downwards. But we have got Christ up there, and all help ready. We cannot climb the precipice of the day without Christ up there to help us; but we *must* go *upwards* if we want to *stand.* We must get into God's presence, and walk there; if not, down we shall go.

May God in grace keep our eyes steady on Christ, and give us to abide in Him, with whom all wisdom is folly, and all strength weakness. If it is to be glory *then, now* it is the cross, and now the wilderness, and nothing but Christ for me in my walk through it.

WORSHIP.

REVELATION iv. v.

I WOULD make a remark or two in regard to the subject of that hymn just sung (102), connecting it with the object of being together in worship; and I would look for the light on the subject that these chapters throw on worship. The whole of chapter iv. presents the glory of Jehovah-el-Shaddai, the Lord God Almighty, and presents it evidently as connected with every scene in which He has displayed it in creation. The rainbow, the heads of creation, the throne, and the elders connected with it, surrounding the throne; but what we know of Him upon that throne brings in more than the statement that all things were created by Him and for His pleasure. And if so, it proves that He would have us see that He cannot stop in creation, and that not only is this One Jehovah-el-Shaddai, but also the God in relationship with His people. What I find so peculiarly blessed in this portion is, not so much the glory of the scene in chap. iv., as the form it takes of a background for what follows in chap. v. No sooner is the mind in the scene of glory than we find One there to whom are reserved certain things. God had got a reserved book in His right hand. You might know me, but if I had a book in my hand you might not know anything about that. There was a book in the hand of Him that sat on the throne, and it was the question who should

open it; and not one creature being found worthy even to look on it, this made John weep. It was connecting that which God had reserved for that One (the alone worthy) with a creature caught up from all the misery below, and asking, "Could such cause the secrets of God to flow forth?"

The thing that comes out here is the feebleness of John; and then, that the Lord is the object of worship.

The elder says, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." Not as Son of God could He have opened the secrets of God to His people had He not prevailed as Son of man. He goes up and takes the book, and then praise flows forth. We ought to remark, that all the worship in this chapter is not only the worship of the Person of the Lord, but worship because He has become the link for letting all the thoughts of God flow down. He says, as it were, "I know the secrets of my Father's heart, and I have a right to open, and let all the secret river of refreshment flow out."

We see many companies here surrounding the Person of the Lord, and all manifesting the same delight in combining to remind Him of His worthiness. In verse 8, we find the same company as in the preceding chapter—the beasts (the living creatures), and the twenty-four elders; and they sing a song that is peculiar. Next, the angels form another choir, and sing (or say) their song; and then "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," utter theirs. The songs differ; but the song of each is entirely about God and the Lamb. Not one there has a word to say about self. How altogether out

of place it would be for any creature to talk of self up there! And why out of place? Because there can be nothing of self to think about. Another will occupy every thought. There would be a shudder through every breast there if any talked about "I;" and this gives liberty to any one now, who would be delivered from that talking of "I." If I speak about myself, I can only say of myself what came from Job; if I speak of Another, I shall have what these companies here have to speak about. Some could speak of the blood; others do not speak of redemption only, but of the Person of the Redeemer, and of the glory that flows out of it. How wonderful that we can speak of the Lord always in connection with ourselves! "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." We may say in heaven, "He washed me in His own blood;" and anything else that brings out the ruin of the creature, and the riches of the grace displayed in Christ, for it is to His glory. In the wide universe now, there are only two who know what the mercy and compassion of God are (God and the poor sinner); but then it will all come out.

I can speak of mercy, not as an angel, but as one who has got the taste of it. Before I knew it, I could not speak of it as a tasted thing. When Israel danced before the calf, God came in, saying, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Bear in mind, that it is the Lamb's glory in their salvation that is for ever to occupy the heart and mind of every poor sinner saved by grace. There in God's presence John finds a whole company, every one of whom is occupied in ascribing glory to the Lamb. In one song he hears a note brought out that must have cheered him more than all the others. He too could join in saying, "He loved me and washed me."

What a poor thing John must have felt himself in connection with this scene, when a door was opened in heaven, and he found himself up there. Ah! and what a poor thing he found he was. God was arranging things to bring out bright rays about the Son of His love, to show him that no creature could fill the place the Lord fills. John must have thought, "What a poor simple thing I was, when God sent for me to let me see He had reserved One alone to open all His secrets. My only answer was, 'No man is found worthy;' and then I wept. Just there I wept, where there was a Man, and more than a Man, on the throne going to show that He alone had the whole thing in His own hands!"

How great the grace of God, wanting to let John know it, taking him up there, saying, "A poor feeble thing like you, is to know that My eye has gone right to the end of time in connection with My Son; I want you to know it, and to show you that My Son is the channel through whom all blessing is to flow out. He is the One who knows all about the land of Egypt, and the waste, howling wilderness. He will show how He knows all about it, and will be the connecting link to let My love flow down." Ah! we do not enough calculate on that living Man on the throne, whose eye is ever down here, and whose sweetest privilege it is to be the connecting link between us and God. Ah! in connection with the incompetency of man, Christ the living Man is the person pictured before me; He is the competent One. Surely, knowing Him thus our hearts can go up in worship, having a deeper and fuller character. I can say, "Christ has overcome the world; Christ has done everything for me: now I have to go through the wilderness for Him." As I go along I shall find difficulties and failure; but Christ says, "I am above it all. As you go

through it all, remember Me, and you will be able to sing a song where John wept. I want to let you know all that I am for you now, and that I passed through everything for you." What we need, first, is the lesson that John learnt, that no creature can hand up anything to God—that the creature has nothing save what God has given in the Son of His love; and that He, the alone worthy One, must be between all that we are, as the connecting link for our own worship. Pitiful things as we are, we have got a heart in heaven, and we can use the name of the Lamb slain, as the channel of all blessing. All through, it tells out the tale of God's love, but there is the spring from whence comes all worship.

THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.

REVELATION xxii. 10.

WE find a special warning given in the beginning of this portion (*v.* 10), an address going forth to a mixed multitude —the unjust, the filthy, and the holy found together. There is also a word put forward to those who in this place professed to be the Lord's people; and there is, when He comes, a reward for those who are really His, and a shutting out of any who, with the profession of His name, are unjust, filthy, &c. (spoken of together with the holy and righteous), a mixed multitude, all bearing His name. We find in verse 15, a further description of those shut out after the blessing pronounced on those who are His. The Lord in the next place sends the testimony to the churches (*v.* 16), "I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." If one looks at what the house of God has become since Pentecost, truly, as Gibbon remarks, "wickedness has never been found like that wrought in the name of the Lord;" but the Lord knows His own, and He sends a word to make all who bear the name of Christian remember that profession is one thing and reality another. Then He puts forth another thing sweeter yet; not only that to which every godly heart could say Amen, but something to satisfy love, to meet the heart's craving.

I know there is the inheritance, and if He is the Root and Offspring of David, there are certain glories; and

those who delight in Him know that He will show forth these glories; and if His glory covers the earth as waters cover the sea, they rejoice in the prospect. Still that would be nothing to satisfy the heart; but there is another thing, "I am the bright and morning star." This is for a people who know the secret, not of being connected only with that glory when He comes as Sun of Righteousness, but of being associated with Himself now, a people who have to weather the night, looking out for the harbinger of day. His people see Him up there, and know that they are one with Him, and long for Him to come, because they know there is no rest of heart save in Him. As a beloved brother was saying, for twenty-eight years and more he had known the blessedness of being a worshipper. And in connection with worship in spirit and truth, most blessed it is to be where we are; but more blessed than that even is our connection with Christ Himself—looking for Him, the Spirit and the Bride saying, "Come."

People are often astonished when they look back on the darkness prevailing even fifty years ago; and why? Because they look more at man than at God. If they looked more at Him who sent down the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, they would see the reason of all revivals. He is always the same. Why did the Holy Ghost begin to work outside the temple? Ah! this Jesus had gone up on high, and the promise of the Father was to be fulfilled to a people outside whom He loved, and the Spirit took up everything for them. And why has there been a revival at the present time? Is the House better than before? Or is evil thickening, and everything growing more dark? Infidelity is on the one hand, and superstition on the other; and what new phase of evil may come next none can

know. And how can any count on going through it all and being kept? Ah! because of One who never wearies, One who can never forsake, One who came down to reveal the worthiness of Him with whom His people are linked; and they can count on Him to keep them in spite of all the evil, looking for deliverance out of it—the Spirit and the Bride saying, "Come." This is the only passage in which the Spirit is presented with the Bride. There is something very touching in connection with wilderness circumstances, seeing the Spirit in that character speaking thus, saying, "Come." Is the Bride for the earth? What has she to do with the earth, with the wilderness, save as Rebecca passing through it? It is this which gives her whole character, a certain position recognized by Christ. Many say, "The temple of the Lord are we;" but does Christ recognize them? In what character is the Bride recognized by Him? As without spot or wrinkle, and to be presented to Himself.

It will be a marvellous scene when Christ presents the Church to Himself, when the last Adam takes that Bride of His to share His glory. Ah! not only that, but the oneness with Himself that characterizes us. What the heart feels is our being looked at as belonging to Himself, taken out of Himself—that the Father sees us, not only in a relationship that links us up with the Son of His love in the glory, but in such a relationship that He could not do without us. He, the Bridegroom, must have the Bride up there.

If you follow His course down here, from the Babe in the manger to the death of the cross, and see Him now in resurrection on the throne of the Father, the circumstances are very different; but, ah! it is the same Lord Jesus, it is Himself; He Himself, the object of our love; and we

know we shall be for His own self in the glory. That is the distinctive thing, that is where the heart rests. One may see the earthly side now, but when we see Christ Himself, it will be the heavenly side, it will be in the full, unhindered energy of the Holy Ghost, having hearts responsive to that blessed grace that brought us there. The first Adam was not alone, and the last Adam will not be so. He also will have His Bride. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come," &c.

Remark the testimony to separation (*v.* 19), not separation from outward wickedness, but from the corruption of truth, a special warning being given to guard it from being tampered with. We are often taken by surprise at seeing outward wickedness, but all must know how infidelity has been put forth, and accepted wholesale by the readers of infidel books, and the Lord says it will go much farther before the end comes. He says, "I have given a book, and I put before the people I love a warning against tampering with this special book; they must be kept, not only unspotted from wickedness, but from the corrupting of this book."

We have to lay a stress on "certainly." Surely *I*, *I* come quickly. Oh, it is the sweetness of that "I" presented there that so touches the heart! "I come," not "I stand at the door knocking," but the Lord speaks of Himself coming for His Bride. Ought He not to be jealous if He is not the only object before our hearts? We have here not alone, "I am the bright and morning star," but, "I come"—presenting Himself with all the savour, all the attractiveness of what He is. Have not some of us known Him for years, and have we not found the attractiveness of His beauty deepening in our souls? What is all we have learned of Him here when com-

pared with the thought of beholding Himself, looking on His face, seeing the One who died for us, the One that loved and watched over us from infancy—oh, with what tender gentleness watched over us!

"Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." An important thing comes out here; that not only should we have communion with His mind in all that meets us in the wilderness, but there is another sort of communion to be enjoyed—communion responsive to the desire of His heart, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." The effect of the bright light shining down has been, that we have found earth would not do for our future course, and we know, because we have it revealed, that He means to come and take us to heaven. This thought has given joy in persecution. But what is the thought of being in heaven compared with the thought of His coming to take us there? At times our hearts are drooping, and we are "hardly bestead;" but what is anything we have to pass through here, if one has the consciousness of being able to respond to Him, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Thou dost desire, Lord, to take up Thy people, and most blessed it will be to be up there; but ah! it is Thyself my soul craves for. Is the desire of the Lord Jesus to come, which is put forth here, burning in my heart? If I know His desire to come, am I able to say "Even so, come"? It is really having communion with that heart of His, whose every thought is the Father's will, and who has been waiting eighteen hundred years to come, and take up the people given by the Father —He the Bridegroom, they the Bride!

PERFECTED FOR EVER.*

PSALM xl. 5.

IN this psalm we have the Spirit of Christ speaking in behalf of the mercy that will reach Israel hereafter. Immediately after that, He goes into the great work they will be brought to know—the work of One who took the place of fulfilling God's *will* when God had no pleasure in sacrifices; and having done that will, He will take the place of proclaiming the faithfulness of Jehovah.

We find the psalm largely quoted in Hebrews ix. It brings out the argument of the apostle to the Hebrew Christians, who, after going on a little, got frightened at difficulties, and were tempted to let slip the substance, and take up the shadow. There is a great deal very important at every time for man here, particularly at the present day. There has been a great deal of Judaizing. I do not mean to charge the present generation only with it. The ten commandments have a place assigned to them as the *sine qua non*, the recognition of which was necessary for true religion while man was under law. To insist on their having that place now tends to bring men into fearful bondage, and to hinder them getting into the full liberty of the children of God.

In Hebrews ix. and x., we find brought out in connection

* This and the two next papers are gleanings from G. V. W.'s ministry in Dublin in 1872.—ED.

with Hebrew Christians the whole question. And just let me from this bring out what the question was to the apostle's mind. There were two points, from the nature of things strangely contrasted the one with the other—one, man's conscience, the other, the glory of God. And the question of the apostle was, whether they ever met together in these Hebrews to whom he wrote. He traces out how the law had not got in its power or aim to make a man perfect as concerns conscience. Let me put the question, What is conscience? Some would say, If Adam had not conscience in nature, how was he to know that he ought not to touch the fruit? There is no force in that remark; for when God had given all blessings to man—"all is yours if you do not touch the tree"—it was clearly right for the man to observe the commandment, and, even without understanding it, to keep it. Directly Eve ate of the fruit there was the balancing as to right and wrong, but tending to wrong. "That is right," "This is wrong," constant exercise in the mind, conscience accusing or excusing—one or other. Could the law make that conscience perfect? It could not, never did, with anybody. Now it is referred to in chap. ix. But turn to chap. x.: "The law . . . can never . . . make the comers thereunto perfect," in contrast with, "By one offering Christ has perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" *i.e.* those set apart by His blood.

I want to look at this in detail. The testimony of Scripture about truth, not only leads us to the blessed portion of the Church as the Bride of Christ, or into the portion of the children of God as sons and daughters, but it also leads us into all the different places where the Lord Himself has displayed His glory; and, as in Romans, the whole question is gone into of how God could take up a

ruined creature and settle it in spite of its ruin. The grand point of the chapter is, how conscience ruined becomes so perfect that God Himself could not make it more perfect, more thoroughly fit for God, for man, for Christ, altogether clean and made good—so that we can serve the living and true God. This will lead into the question of priesthood. There were two priests—Aaron and Melchisedec. Christ is never said to be a Priest after Aaron, but after Melchisedec; but all that Aaron's priesthood pointed to as a sign-post in connection with sin, this the Lord did, but did in a way entirely in contrast with the law and the system of Aaron's priesthood.

In Lev. xxiii., you find the two great works—the Passover and the day of Atonement at the end of the year. Judaism began with the Passover and ended with the day of Atonement; Christianity begins with atonement and goes on to fellowship with God. The two things in Leviticus are atonement and that which carries sin clean away—the azazel, or scapegoat. A system had been set up, and the question was how that system, being a system that recalled sin to mind every step of the way, could be carried out among a sinful and a stiff-necked people. God had a resource so that He would not be defiled while dwelling among them—the blood was brought in and sprinkled on the mercy-seat. The blood was for God, it was not putting away guilt. Read verse 16, chapter xvi., "He shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness." They were stiff-necked and rebellious, but there was no pretence of removing their sins. It was done for God, it justified

them, it pointed to the blood of another, and enabled God to pass by sin, not to cleanse from sin. The goat took away what? Directly the day was past, it was in the mind of the Mediator that sin would be again contracted, for the great day of atonement was to come round again at the end of the year. When I turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, as in Psalm xl., there is this remarkable thing. He is represented in Hebrews x., as setting up a new system. There had been the tabernacle and the sacrifices, and no conscience perfect, and the two sides the Scripture presents are the counterpart of Leviticus xvi. He goes in and sets up something that never existed before; He never did this but this once; and He provides not for the removal of guilt only, but for those who had been dead in trespasses and sins. He provides for their being able to be dead to sin. He takes sin away. Was Paul a man habitually sinning? No; he was living in the power of the life of Christ, and of the marvellous work Christ had accomplished; and he knew the Lord had so presented himself before God, that all contrary to God was met in the humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and says, "I reckon myself to be dead indeed unto sin."

We shall find a striking contrast between Leviticus xvi. and Hebrews ix., x., in connection with what the Lord did. Just remark, as characteristic of this, that we do not get before that eternal redemption or salvation spoken of. There is nothing here on earth, but in heaven there is the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, and all the sacrifices were offered in connection with the government of God. There had never been a man in heaven until the Lord Jesus Christ went there. He went into the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. Just take some verses, and we shall see what is very remarkable in

Hebrews. First, it is done in eternity, not in time; secondly, it involves the whole Godhead; thirdly, it is heaven, not earth. Let me read a few verses in chapter ix. 11, 12: "Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come . . . by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." 14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" 22: "Without shedding of blood is no remission." 24: "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." 26: "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." 28: "Christ was once offered . . . and unto them that look for Him shall He appear . . . without sin unto salvation." Now when we come to chapter x., we find more than that, not His coming in the end of the ages, but His going in to heaven; and having gone in, in the power of His own sacrifice, He sits down at the right hand of God, and the throne of God becomes—what? The abiding-place of Him who could not add anything more to His work without the denial of His own glory. Without the denial of God's thought about the work He had done, He could not add anything more to the settlement of the question of sin. See how He is spoken of here; the sort of authority He takes, not to set aside the work of Moses, but when it comes to the question of sin, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me." The mind rises to God, who prepared a body for Him, who had written a book about Him, rises to Him with *full* intelligence—the Son of God able to choose the

good, and refuse the evil, and all that sinful men might bring in in connection with sin. All was defiled, and not only so, but if men brought thousands and tens of thousands of victims, all would be utterly unable, not only to satisfy God's mind about sin, but even to satisfy their own conscience. If all the flocks on all the hills were brought before me, a man full of sin, are they to be sacrificed? Is it my first-born that I am to give up? What would these do? He comes in with all dignity, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not; I delight to do thy will, O God." Thus we have God and His Son, and the way the Holy Ghost comes in as a witness to us. (*v.* 15.)

What was this will of which He speaks as His lot to do? Not sacrifices, but "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Nobody else had part with Him in doing it. Numbers among Jews and Gentiles will get the fruit of it. He did the work, and did it all alone. "I delight to do thy will, O my God." Just mark verse 9, when He said, "Lo, I come," He takes away the first, that is, all the offerings, that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified—set apart once for all. I am persuaded that until the soul gets simply to see the force and meaning of that, and not only so but conscience also, that inward exercise the mind has about itself in God's presence, gets exercised with this offering of Himself, the conscience will never be made perfect and get its proper bearing.

Just see the position, setting up a new state of things, introducing something new. How long has that true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man, how long has that state of things been in existence? I suppose, if we took the thirty-four years of the Lord's life from 1872, we should have the period. And what was the great object? God did it for His own pleasure, before the thing was an-

nounced to anybody. It is the revelation of a new character of God. The character of God! How that thought comes to light, that God and sin cannot meet! If He brings me to the place where He is, what do I find there? Not that it is full of sins, but that the great leading Person, who marks the place to me, made an end of sin before He went in there. Quite different from the tabernacle or the temple, where there was nothing but sin, sin, sin; nothing but curtains and distance from God; and now I am told to go right in. What meets me? There is the rent veil, the flesh of God's Son, going through that, the death of Christ. I go in—yes, to see what is at the other side. I go in as confessedly one who has not one word to say for myself, because He has borne the penalty; and the way up leads into the purest light possible, where the object that meets my mind is only one, the Son of man, who sat down at God's right hand. There is no guilt whatever in this place I have come to, a place where sins, where guilt, cannot live. All has been judged, all borne, recorded if you please. Because mercy shines from this place, compassion shines there, and God is presented there as meeting conscience. Ah! the sinner is received in, and seen through, God's delight in that blessed One before Him.

The question comes in very fairly with regard to atonement. What really is the thought of Scripture about it? Is it that there is a debt contracted by the family of God, and that some one has paid it off? That is not Scripture. God presents in the person of His Son all the blessedness of those traits of His character which enable Him to be just, not merely in justifying the sinner down here, but in enabling Him to be just in receiving the worshipper right into the light where He dwells. As far as God is concerned there is no idea

of any other offering. There is often a confounding of confession of sin with an offering to be presented afresh, which is a positive denial, not only of the one sacrifice, but of the character of God Himself. The blessed Lord did bear the penalty on the tree; and all one can do is in reverence to bow when one thinks of the Lord drinking that cup which the Father had put in His hand. There is no possibility of the human mind measuring it. You must be able to comprehend the Son, and know the Son, if you would know what He suffered when forsaken of God. What passed there was known to Himself most surely, to God most surely too; but the clearest thought I can get in connection with what my sin is in the presence of God, is that because my sins were attributed by God to His Son, they hindered the light of God shining in upon His Son—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That thorough independence of God, which is sin, which characterised me, He bore it, bore it all, and lives at the right hand of God. He has taken His seat there, proclaiming that it was according to the foreknowledge of God that He should bear that judgment on Calvary.

See how that meets the question, all that inward balancing of the mind of man, as to his state before God and the question of sin. The believer looks it in the face. Am I a sinner? and has my sin passed all measurement? Yes; the Son of God has borne the penalty, and was forsaken of God on account of my sin. Can God look on anyone, who through grace gets an interest in the humiliation of the Son of God, and attribute to him once more that sin that was judged on the cross? And could God have a thought that that sin should survive in His presence? If He could, the God that appointed a way for bearing judgment would be leaving it still for the

sinner to bear. The place this puts the soul in is perfect peace. The conscience does not want a hiding-place now. Sin would have shut man out from God's presence were it not that Christ bore the penalty on the tree.

Just look at the inexorableness of the holiness of God. Nothing could turn Him aside. I might say, reasoning as a man, I am such a contemptible creature, and He was God's Son, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. And what sort of thoughts had God? That when that Person stood in the gap there was no deviation whatever from the impossibility of God and sin meeting together. The Son of God fully able to take the place of charging Himself with the sins of all God's people, saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That is what He did, and then He went to heaven to present Himself there as the One who had done the work. By one offering He hath perfected for ever, not those that are *purified*, but those that are sanctified, set apart by blood. Have you been thus set apart? Have you recognized that blood? And has it made you own that you must walk in a new way? That having gone through the flesh of this Lord Jesus, having gone in by a blood-sprinkled way, and having met God in light, you must count yourself separated to God? If the blood of the Lord has no worth in the mind of a man, no practical effect, you will find his conscience is not perfect. The work and value of Christ's sacrifice cannot be pleaded by him. When the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has been let by God's mercy into a soul, that person counts himself separated by it.

The difference of grace and law comes out. At Pentecost men were terrified to hear of the Lord Jesus being up in heaven. Now when you hear of the blood, if you draw nigh, you will find all has become yours.

If I have Him whose blood was shed, I know that He has made me perfect before God as far as conscience is concerned. Before a person can start to walk as a Christian safely, he must know that his conscience is perfect, and that the question of sin is settled completely. It is a test for a good many, this truth. If I have been trying to salve over things in myself, I get a measure of contentment, a certain measure of quietness. Now I am getting near to God, and I find that I am not settled. The effect on conscience when it is really perfect is greater the nearer you get to God; the nearer to the light, the more comfort you have. I have all sorts of feelings; but when I stand in the light, I have the conviction of the work and value of Him who is on the throne making it the mercy-seat. That is the character of that place where God and Christ are. If you can go by faith, then you get a perfect conscience; and the nearer you get, the more the thoughts of God about Him who is on that mercy-seat, the more the soul is filled with holy boldness in the presence of God. My conscience is fit for God Himself. God looking on me must recognize that I have no plea except this—that before His Son went into the holiest of all, after dying on the cross, He shed His blood for me, and I am admitted to God on this ground when there is complete victory over the whole question of sin, balancing all the traits of God's character, so that God is glorified in receiving a poor sinner just as he is; and then comes right down to the dark place, as it was, the bright light of God giving confidence that Christ is there. That is the place everything is dated from for us, and the conscience is in keeping with it.

It is a different question if I have a good conscience, not a perfect conscience. A good conscience is where there

is no sense of having done any thing in thought wrong. A perfect conscience is brought to the light where Christ is, so that the soul can say—I say it humbly—"Thy word points out to me the true tabernacle thou didst pitch. I come on that ground, the blood of Thy Son. If that is Thy ground, it is my ground." The effect is most blessed; for the known certainty that it is God's ground, produces the feeling that He that is precious to God, the Son of His love, is the One that is precious to us, and that we and God thoroughly understand one another, and the conscience is perfect in His presence.

As to worship, the priests had to be continually offering sacrifices. What sort of priests are we? Part of a royal priesthood. The Lord has taken His place on high, and has here people, part of a royal priesthood. Peter speaks of it (1 Peter ii. 9), "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." Are we to bring sacrifices? Yes. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name."

The question of sin is never settled but by the blood shed on Calvary. When in the family of God, if there is failure, is the person to be cast out? Never. Is the sin to be covered up? Never. Then comes in confession—of what? If I fail twenty times a day, I hope I should make confession; I am quite prepared to say it in all simplicity. If I fail to man, I confess to man; if to God, I say that I failed in walking consistently with His complete forgiveness. I have been washed, but have been tampering with the world to-day. I ought to confess, if I have been tampering with the world, that I am heartily ashamed of it; it is not like Christ, and I am one of His, and have been doing something inconsistent. Because I

am a son, I should do nothing but serve Him. What could I do down here but serve? Could I go and sit down with ease and comfort in the midst of frivolity? I could not do it. Could the Son of God down here seek merely the unbending of His mind by conversation? I have a purged conscience, and everything that disparages having a conscience fit for God makes light of the blood; not by confession rested in, but in making the confession is power found for resisting evil that was confessed.

I see evil everywhere around me; I look up and see the true tabernacle, the accepted sacrifice, the One by whom is virtue and power. The way is open, right into the holiest of all. To me there is something wonderful in all the infiniteness of the character of God, all the unsearchableness of God, all that expressed Him shown out by the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; ar d I who in judgment before Him always presented a dirty spot within me, am made whiter and cleaner than snow, perfectly spotless, nothing to hinder God's intercourse with me, nothing to hinder the aspiration of my heart.

Another thing; ah, God does rest in His love there! Heaven is a wonderfully bright place, full of glory, a place where our hearts ought to be continually turning, going to get refreshed in Him in God's delight, in Christ. I find the mind of God so occupied with Christ, and in connecting me with Him, that the delight of God in Christ is joy to my own heart. Second thing; there is sin going off, taken away. What is the limit? Christ is the scapegoat.

In Hebrews you do not find the new nature spoken of. If God were to say, "I will take you to heaven just as you are," I hope I should not go so; I hope to get rid of the sin, the sense of contrast between Him in His perfect-

ness and me in my evil. I shall be like Him; but the consciousness of sin comes in in all my communion with Him, and it will be got rid of most certainly. It was no accident; He might have taken the sin clean out of us, but the battle is still going on. By leaving sin in us, He gave us the opportunity of voluntarily identifying ourselves with Him against the old nature. When He got Israel out of Egypt He formed circumstances to drive them in upon Himself, to make Him their choice as He had made them His choice. He leaves us to prove whether we will take part with Christ against the world, the old man, and Satan, who loves to blend the old man and the new together. He is presented to us in humiliation; he that believes is crucified, dead, buried. The old man is dead in God's mind; then I reckon myself so, it is the stoppage of sin. I have lusts and habits of the old nature, and not of the new. God looks on me as dead together with Christ; He reckons me dead; then I can cease from these things.

As to the scene up there, God has got His rest in Christ, evil has been fully put away through faith reckoning self dead, and ceasing from sin. There is no fearful looking for of judgment. Guilt is the state of a man having sinned waiting for the penalty; but the penalty is paid, I have not that to bear. Christ has paid it. Sin is put a stop to in the will of the believer. Sin is self-willed independence of God. I am sure, if anyone has learned what His grace is, he will say, "Whenever I have a will of my own in contrast to Christ's will, I choose to die to my own will; I have made up my mind to do that. I cease from sin."

THE PROOF OF LOVE TO CHRIST.

JOHN xiv. 15–23.

WHEN the first passover was kept, all the principles connected with the transit of Israel out of Egypt, and through the wilderness, were brought to light. God that gave them to them looked forward to their progress; and the Lord Himself, the Paschal Lamb (John xiii.), set out before the minds of His people how entirely He understood how everything would be secured in His absence, whatever they might be, by the position He would occupy as being the Guardian of His people on high, meeting all the failure of His people on earth. Any one who reads chap. xiii., I think, may well say, "What a wonderful thing!"—not only what the person of the Lord was, being able to look to the end of time, and to embody in a few verses all these great principles; but having the graciousness of heart to put Himself forward, just as now He makes us know that whatever the difficulties until He comes to take us to Himself He charges Himself with every difficulty, and meets it all.

In the first part of chap. xiv., He takes higher ground still as the only One that knew all about the Father; and He introduces the Father by mentioning the Father's house, and presenting Himself as the One who had come to guide us into it in the end, and how they who knew Him ought to read the Father in Him. His own self as a Person, all His ways, thoughts, habits, all His mind—the

great thing with Him was to present the Father to His disciples. There were the works He had wrought in the name of the Father as Servant, and the words He had spoken, and the love He exhibited in all His course to His children. In that wondrous love of His, He puts forward to the disciples the place they would hold when He had gone on high. That connects itself with testimony. The fulness of His love which knew all the Father's counsels should pray for the Holy Ghost, and all that He had in Himself as Messenger of the Father would become marvellously connected with the believer by the Spirit of truth dwelling in him—He the truth gone on high, the Spirit in them, and the character of their relationship marked in this way as to life: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Well, from that verse 20, He shows another very precious thing, that He understood the heart of a child of God, and what would make it happy in the wilderness, and what His position was as a Servant, and presents that as instruction which occupies the latter part of the chapter.

I would like to follow up what I said the other day when speaking on this chapter. Note verses 15 and 21. If ye love me, treasure up my commandments—injunctions. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." "If a man love Me, he will keep (treasure up) My *word*" (not words): "and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

The Lord was really bringing out the two grand principles of His life when here—thoroughly obedient, perfectly dependent. The difference sometimes escapes notice. Dependence is more than obedience. In Him everything

was perfect, and there was the most implicit obedience, so that at the close of His course on the cross, His mind seems to turn to Scripture to see if anything had not been fulfilled, and then He said, "I thirst." The last word that described what the Perfect Servant would do, meeting the mind of Him whose Servant He was, He gave up the ghost. The spirit of dependence went further. He had the whole heart of the Father fixed on Him when as a Servant of a lower kind, fulfilling His duties as Messiah, King of Israel, He did it in all the savour of His relationship to the Father. We have a striking instance in Gethsemane. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Not merely I must obey, but as a Son that had fully entered into the mind of His Father in perfect subjection. Christ was the perfect model of dependence in two ways. One, always seeking solitude in the enjoyment of communion; the other, the word of His Father leading Him to thrust Himself out, and set His face like a flint before the world. If I walk as a son and a servant, I realize the heart of a child in perfect dependence. I also get the injunction which comes often in a different way.

One remark I would like to make—it often escapes the attention of the children of God—as to the power of the word as received by the person. When God said, "Let there be light," there was light; and every word of God, if I might give it an epithet, I should call creative. When I find the word comes to me, I cannot say "I cannot." God says these things, and as sure as He says it, there is power given to me to do the thing He speaks of. These exhortations scare people, but are entirely met in that way. To the overcoming one Christ says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear," not to him that shall overcome. The person

becomes an overcomer. Do not say, I cannot overcome. Has the word come to you? That word brings power with it. Every command comes to irritate the unconverted; but when sheltered in Christ it comes with the power of God, and there is power because God has put it on His own people.

Just see what an appeal there is in these words of Christ. We know He has loved us, and revealed to us that He gave Himself for us; and His own word tells us that, His thought was, that "they which live should not live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." He says, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Again, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." It is a great thing to realize that that Christ of God is a living Person in heaven, occupied with the people He has given life to down here, and that having saved us, and given us Himself, bearing all the responsibility in God's presence—that He has given life to *me*, that He has given life to *you*, and it is the desire of His heart that we should recognise His commandments, and live to Him. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." "If any man love Me, he will keep My words; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." On the ground of that, the heart will be happy all through the wilderness. Do you find your hearts thoroughly happy? If you were to sit down and give an account of last year, has the happiness (I mean the enjoyment of it in your souls) been greater than the sense of difficulties? Which do you find nearest to you, the Lord in His presence, or the difficulties you have to combat and fight with? There is a great deficiency in us in realising the fulfilment of

that gracious word of the Lord, spoken in verse 21, and repeated in verses 23 and 24.

This brings up very much the question of Christian experience. People often put experience entirely in the wrong place. There is no experience that I know of preceding the reception of the word of the living God. God and the word of His grace come first. When that has been received, and the Lord is known as a living Person, is there no rich enjoyment in the heart of His love, as we pass along, presented by Christ as that which He thought would make us happy? Abundantly full it is, and however deep the sorrow through which we may be called to pass, I am bold to say that a man full of the Holy Ghost, and walking in obedience and dependence, will find the joy preponderate over the affliction. "Our light affliction which is but for a moment." Then you say, "Dear me! I must give up everything if I know this." And what is the everything that you give up? The revelation of God's love does make demand of surrender; but what of that, when I think of what it is to have Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, and the soul passing through the wilderness conscious of His eye on me, His heart with me, and in the enjoyment of His love?

Let me give another turn to that thought as to the portion that is ours, and the sorrow into which it may lead us. Persons often pity themselves. True Christians waiting for the Lord have a great deal of sorrow they could tell of. Did it ever occur to you to sit down and write out a list of your sorrows, and present them to Him who was the Man of sorrows, and bore them all for your sake? I should be ashamed to do it. I recognize that character of prayer, that it is the gracious intention of the Lord for us to empty out our care before Him, and ask

Him for what we need, even when the thing that presses on us may not be His mind to give us. The Lord Jesus knew no place to lay down the weight upon Him but in the presence of the Father. If I knew my place in Him on high, I could not bring my sorrows there to make much of them. I may present them, and am quite free to do it, and think how much deeper sorrow He went through. I am ashamed to speak of myself when He suffered so much for my sake.

He that hath My commandments and treasures them up, keeps them, not obeys them merely. It is a privilege to have a directing word from the Lord—it is commandment, injunction, the stepping-stone to put my foot on as I go along. Very precious that word "keepeth," that is what the word is here, it involves distinct obedience. You never treasure up a word from anyone if you do not obey it. The love remains after the opportunity has passed for meeting His mind. "He that loveth Me shall be loved of my Father." You and I ought to be able to say, I love the Lord, and to say it to Himself—not in the coarse way many boast of their love to Him, without seeing what His love has been to them. "We love Him because He first loved us." Peter, when the Lord speaks to him—Peter says first, "I love, yes, I love." Then he says, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." He takes Him on the ground of His divine glory, and the Lord cannot deny that He has given warmth to Peter's heart. Peter could therefore say it, and say it boldly. It is different—the consciousness of love to Christ when in the secret of God's presence, and when in the world. When in the world I say, "They do not know His word, I do; they have no regard for Christ, I have, and am dependent upon Him." The Holy Ghost is given to us (Rom. v.), proved by

our obedience to the known will of God, enabling me to find out the things the Lord would have me to do, and behind which the word stands. I am one of His body, and have to do these things expressive of my obedience to Him.

"He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him." It is the display of personal affection in the family, not salvation here. What a need there is, when you look at religion and Christianity in our day, of the family affection and ties of the children of God being restored to the soul. It is not a question with you or me whether we are saved, but if we are children of the Father. If Christ the first-born among many brethren is in heaven, we want so to walk that the love of the Father may flow toward us, and be free to flow toward us. If we walk contrary to Him, it will stop the expression of His mind, because the child is in the house, belonging to the house, and in the room with the parent, subjecting the child to the parent. "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him." And what has the Father seen me do to-day? And what was His thought? That I was very good? Oh, no! but that grace had given me the perception to carry out the mind of the Father. "Shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Practically I find that this is connected with that simple truth—the effect of the word of Christ dwelling in my heart is to cast light on my circumstances. The word treasured up and kept. It makes all the difference if you have a week's difficulty before you, and you have no word that connects itself with you. You will be exercised, and fretted, and distracted; and perhaps a Christian of less power will be in the circumstances in a different way, finding this word and that word to throw such light upon them that it

changes the bearing of them all, making the sorrow turn to testimony that he is the Lord's. The very darts that the wicked one uses to harass me, make me a testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot correct yourself with the apostle's doctrine save by the word dwelling in you. I do not believe we are so taught in the word as a practical thing to ourselves as to be able to read new discipline by the word of Christ treasured up by us.

Well, as to this question of manifestation, the Lord knew what He was saying—how He could let a ray of light shine down to Saul of Tarsus; and how now, if we are dependent and obedient, He can communicate the sense of His presence. Judas says, "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" and the Lord repeats, "If a man love Me, he will treasure up My word." Aye, that is much larger than commandment. How many a bright thought the Son had of the Father down here. "Commandment" is, Do you do this; be the doers and workers in a certain path. The "word" is the expression of the mind of the perfect Servant.

"If a man love Me." And do you *love* the Lord Jesus Christ? Can you face that word, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—cursed for eternity? Do you love Him? The simple heart that believes says, "Oh yes;" and not boasting as though it was the expression of goodness in itself. Have I been forty-eight years under the tender guardian care of the Lord Jesus Christ, such a One as He is, and have I not learned His love and enjoyed it—the pure outbreathing of love divine to those without strength and ungodly?

He lays it home in a blessed way; "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Really there is no difficulty in making a soul conscious of His presence. And

have I got it practically? Is the Spirit ungrieved in me? Does the word so dwell in me that there is the consciousness of the nearness of Abba, and of Christ Himself with me in the wilderness? And here, in verse 24, He puts it forward as Abba's word. As the only-begotten Son He had Abba's word with Him; as the perfect Servant He had what was written in the book. He knew what a Son's heart was, and what a Servant's. Abba's word is what He gives us as our fare down here. He could not have been here save as knowing the Father. He had something to do for the Father down here. It was His stay and support, Abba's love and Abba's word; because a Son, therefore a Servant. Satan is god of this world. What have I to do with the world? Serve God in it surely; but the world is not my portion.

"These things I have spoken unto you, being yet present with you: but the Comforter (Paraclete), which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." No doubt this had weight with the apostles. The word of God is known by reading it in the book; it is what is written. The Lord says, "If you do not attend to Moses, how can you listen to My word?" I should have been inclined to put it the other way, and say, "You do not attend to Moses because you do not attend to the Lord;" but He says otherwise, showing what Scripture is to the mind of Christ. It is the great difference in persons reading the word. If one is dependent on the Lord, he counts on the Spirit to give him power to use Scripture, and to bring Scripture to his mind when conversing with others. The Spirit guides the child of God as to the use of the word and as to his own heart too. I get fellowship with the

Lord, the only-begotten Son. I am a son, therefore a servant, and treasure up the word; and the Lord sets His seal to it by letting His countenance shine on the person.

"Let not your heart be troubled." You must judge. "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." The world gives after a fashion; it can only give part. When He makes His peace our portion it is another thing. In Philippians the apostle talks of the peace of God keeping, and the God of peace being with him. Christ had perfect peace, conscious He was the doer of the word,—just what a believer understands. It is very simple; in time of trial the mind will let everything pass except something about Christ which sets us in heart before God. "The peace of God." I do not limit it to peace of soul; it is peace for all varieties of circumstances. Christ is the peace. "My peace I give unto you." It is what you must learn. A "babe" only learns in small measure, "young men" will learn it more largely, and the "fathers" still more deeply. Each has to *learn* it. Are you skilful in it? How long have you been happy in Christ? and are you skilful in this, carrying perfect peace through all your circumstances? Have you known how to carry the vessel with this peace in it? I believe we have great cause for shame as to what is practical in this respect. The heart of the Lord seeks to have us thoroughly good soldiers. We are not skilful in this inward life, and so the outward life is not to the praise and glory of God as it might be. What a thought, that the Lord in heaven, if He looks on such as you, seeing every trouble round about you—what a thought in His heart that He should be your peace! Is it really true that Christ, the Lord of glory that spoke that word, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, is there in heaven, His eye on the heart? And that such a word as

verse 27 is made good to His disciples? He is going away, and puts it before them, challenges the heart's affections to Himself, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice." The principle is, that Christ cares for my entering into His joys. Can I do it? Have I done it? Did ever such a thought cross my mind, and rest upon my heart, "I am in the field of battle (and a great deal of battle goes on within me), but the Lord that has loved me—He, thank God, is at rest upon the throne." The question is, whether I have any power in entering into this thought at the present time. Let me take a very simple figure. If there were a tempest, and a sailor out in it, if he knew his wife and child were safe at home, he would have a thought of thankfulness, "They are safe. I may be exposed to all these difficulties, but the objects of my affection are safe." It is just the same with the blessed Lord. I could not in nature rise up to Christ's joy, but having the Spirit I can. The blessed thing is that Christ cares for it.

"And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." When I am gone you will have this mark of confidence. "Hereafter I will not talk much with you." He was restrained, because the prince of this world was coming, and all He had to do was to go to the Father.

I ask and entreat you to look and to see, whether in the present time, when through mercy, page upon page of Scripture has been brought out before us, whether we are walking in the power of the truth to the eye of God, to the eye of the Father who loved us, to the eye of Christ who cares about the state of our affections and of our thoughts. He is large-hearted enough to take notice of everything in each one of us; and He desires that we should be practically consistent, since we are sons, and therefore servants of God.

NOTES OF A READING

On 2 Corinthians.

I suppose the account of Paul's conversion in Acts would be connected with this, as also his testimony on the stairs at Jerusalem, where he gives the account of God's personal dealing with himself and of his connection with the Gentiles; at least that would be part of it. What would the whole of it be? The whole of it, I suppose, would be the last Adam in all His beauty in the glory looking into a soul down here as the light and the life. Vigour of life seems to have characterized Paul; he had just what the Ephesians had lost—their first love. *They* seemed to forget the rapture of the love, and to get into candlestick duties; not that they had grown cold merely, but they had let slip this amazing thing. Works, and faith, and love are all spoken of; but they had forgotten the power of His own grace and beauty. The light of life was more than light by itself. The first discovery of the light was of the character of God in contrast with Satan, who had Paul in his power. The Nazarene was up there, the Son of God, and needed him, the persecutor. 3rd verse: "If our gospel be *veiled*." It is not only the counsel of God, but the character of the place brought out in action. The whole moral character of the Father was beaming through the Son, and telling itself forth on the cross. The light of the gospel of the glory is different from the

"image." He is as much the image of God sitting by the woman of Samaria as in the glory. He stood forth confessed as the Man who was truly forsaken of God, but who did not forsake God. Christ cannot look into a heart and not quicken it. Christ and the soul cannot come together without the communication of life. Paul was a man exactly like myself, and he walked brim-full of Christ to overflowing. In suffering, energy, everything, he lived to Christ. In life I get the character of warmth.

The "image" is a remarkable expression; I suppose one might say the fac-simile. The whole character of God came out in a Man; God manifest in flesh. The Father was the One He was dwelling in, and He in Him. Saints overlook too much the grace of God in having presented it in that way—in a Man. That Man doing a work gives me the infiniteness of Christ as a Man. I have not so large a vessel as Paul, but he had not a bit more eternal life than I have; it is our common portion. Saints get occupied with gifts, not with life. Many are sent to carry life in their souls; few have gifts, and the power of testimony is the power of life. If you are brim-full of this life, and I have a great gift, it will turn out that *you* are the edifier of the Church, not I. I may give a testimony as clear as Balaam's, and it will be a stumbling-block if I do not know how to walk. There may be life without warmth. Peter had self-willed blunder-headedness, with great personal attachment to Christ, trying to keep the Master straight, to turn the Master from the cross; but he was full of love.

In Old Testament times man was told not to make an image of God. God meant to present Himself in Christ, and say, "Now if you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." Oh the grace that comes out, the mercy that

comes out there! In John xiv., there is great stress laid on that. Christ wanted to get souls occupied with the Father as seen in Him. "My Father spake the words, did the works, &c.: In Person I reveal Him, in words I reveal Him, and in works I have revealed Him. If you are conversant with Me, you are conversant with the Father." He dovetails all that into the place He is in now in that fourteenth of John. "When I am gone, I will take advantage of your weakness; whatever ye shall ask in My name I will do it, and I will take the range of the thought of My Father about the Paraclete, and will send Him down to you."

I never find souls who have doubts and questions in their minds as to salvation looking into the face of Christ. I do not think it is possible to look in the face of Christ and say, "Thou dost not look as if Thou wouldst have mercy, and be a Saviour to me." That state of mind shows distance of soul from the person of Christ Himself. Directly you look into the face of Christ there, you get the whole doctrine of "changed into the same image from glory to glory." It is the last Adam putting down everything you brought into the world with you.

Verse 6. There is a remarkable contrast between light shining out of darkness in creation, and into darkness in redemption. The light that shone for Stephen had no effect on Saul of Tarsus; but a little after his time came, and the gap in the army of Christ, Paul is brought to fill up in a larger way than Stephen. In the end of the first chapter of John, Christ walks off taking people after Him, picks up two of John's disciples, Philip, &c. A virtue comes out in each case that lays hold of their hearts, and all are found after at the Sea of Galilee. (John xxi.)

The Ten Commandments would cut me down at once, they irritate every man's flesh except Christ's.

The latter part of verse 6 is most astounding. I could not understand the character of God apart from revelation by the work of Christ. I cannot understand mercy, &c. If I give my thoughts of mercy, they would not go beyond God being able to shut His eyes. But He made His love manifest, sent His Son to be the propitiation. Then I say, "It is all right; I was dead in sins, and the Son came to be the propitiation, and to give me life after." By His Son He expresses love; it is no mere passing by sin. There conscience gets boldness before Him. I cannot have my eyes fixed on Christ, where Christ is, as the accepted sacrifice, without having a perfect conscience, a conscience perfect, because formed on the very thing that His holiness finds rest in. God has told me about Himself in the truth that His Son has borne the penalty. If I am not satisfied, that is only saying that I am more holy than God.

Life and light cannot shine in, and not shine out. A person would be justified in saying to another, "I have watched your conduct, and it is not expressive of eternal life." Life must show itself—the whole habit of soul must show itself. It has been a question with me whether it is the person of the Lord or the light shining in, that is the treasure. (Eph. iii. 17.) I have sometimes thought the treasure is, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by *faith*, not by the Spirit. That my soul may be so before God, that He may see Christ dwelling in me by faith. If I want to carry the vase in that way I shall have difficulties. My eye upon Him brings the light right down here. The grand discovery of the present day is a living Person in living intercourse with each one, and occupied with us. Paul says, "I want to run straight up there to Christ, and Christ alone." Everything was light to Paul,

because he had Christ always as his object. It was a divine power that made it available. In talking to souls, you have to take each just where it is before God. You must take the soul up where it is, and go on with it.

If Christ says that He died for all, that they who live might live to Him, and not to themselves, it is not much for the heart to say. "I go in for that." It is but in little things that I can live to Him, but I will live to Him in those little things.

My faith does not make atonement, does not carry in the blood; but if I am to get blessing, I am to walk in all the freshness of one that sees Christ there and knows His heart. If it becomes a real thing to me—there He is before God, and I am all that in Him—one life, &c., it becomes power. The substance is the great thing. The feebleness of the vessel is pretty strongly marked. Nothing could shine out of Saul of Tarsus till Christ had shone in.

Verses 8, 9. Trouble, perplexity, downcasting.

Verse 10. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." Our voluntary act through faith. Verse 11. "Always *delivered unto* death." Both might be going on together. My own mind looks on bearing about the dying, as different from the death. I find Christ going through life waiting on God, as One whose ear was digged, and had no ear for things down here, whose eye did not see according to the sight of man. He saw everything as the Servant of God, so there was an inability to take in the things here. He saw Satan behind them. Christ just passed along quietly as the Servant of God; He never took or sought anything for Himself. The things were presented to Him, but He could not take them in their then state. He knew everything would be His from the hand of God, and refused to take it in any

other way. I have to carry that out; I am a follower of the carpenter's Son. He could not take the things here without sanctioning Satan. He could take no exemption from suffering from Satan's hand. The world was devil-tossed and devil-tortured in every way. I cannot be what Christ was. He had no sin, but His word to me is to walk as He walked. You see the beauty of the life of Christ being manifested. He comes to a Philadelphian and says, "I charge myself with all your difficulties; just you walk with Me, I will settle all for you. I know how to take you out of it." The very principle He puts forth to the Philadelphians was the very principle He walked by Himself.

"Mortal flesh." Death came into the world by sin, and passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. "I glory in infirmities;" He could sing a song over Satan. As you pass through life there will be a breaking of everything about you, and of yourself too, that the life may shine out. There is often a great deal of self-will mixed up with martyrdom. Many rush into the place, like Peter, without their Master; many a one serving the Lord in a humble, quiet way, has the spirit of a martyr, not counting their lives dear for Christ's sake.

Verse 13: It is beautiful to see the Lord giving the apostle the same sort of place He had Himself as the Servant to God, for the people who were dear to God. All service costs the person something. If you go about washing people's feet you must expect to be knocked about. Paul had to wash the Corinthians' feet. They were getting power, and gifts, and knowledge, and were a little lifted up while Paul is kept ground in the mill, broken to pieces, ready to restore them, when they admit their failure. We may fairly challenge our hearts about the last three verses:

16. The breaking of all that is outward.

17. Afflictions rolling in.

18. There it is God working for blessing for us. Very gracious of the Lord to put one like Paul as a bell-wearer for the flock, to show how far the life of Christ could be carried out consistently in such poor things as we are. We see in Paul's life the exceedingly blessed portion we have. Paul's heart was full of blessing; everything he looked upon he saw Christ behind it. The poor worldly heart is glad of prosperity, and things that suit itself; here was a man smashed and broken to powder, and he says he is more than conqueror. I should think he was one of the happiest men ever on earth, walking consistently with the life and light he had got. If I have the life and the light, and am not consistent, I could not have that 18th verse. Paul had got it, "To me to live is Christ." Phil. i. does not show how the power of life was *in* him, but how it worked and came out. If I am one spirit with the Lord, if He is Head and I a member, the grace that set me in such union is the power that makes me say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

I often think no man could joy like Paul; no man ever came so near Him who was the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, in trials and troubles as Paul; and no man was full of such bright light, and never any so full of joy.

PART FIFTH.

LETTERS.

From 1850–1877.

Part Fifth.

LETTERS.

Letter written thirty years ago.

My dear Sister,—I have borne you on my heart and mind with much anxiety through all your tide of trial, and now feel anxious that the fruit of it should appear.

That which I desire for you is fellowship with Jesus in that which distinguished Him so pre-eminently above His fellows—repose of character. Quietness of spirit from a mind and heart shut up and engaged in divine love and glory is my ambition. How blessed and how unearthly the calm, quiet, unruffled composure of the Lord's course!

No haste, no hurry, because, though on earth, yet still in heaven. His mind, His heart, deep buried in His Father's love. And may we not thus abide in Christ, and Christ in us? In real fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; walking in the same Spirit, abiding in the Spirit, led by the Spirit?

May the unction which you have received *abide* in you. Indeed, I count myself your brother in Jesus, and therefore as well free as bound to be anxious for you. More than this, there is a stake risked on every saint by Jesus, which makes the walk of every brother and sister as our

own. For the glory of Jesus has been given us—not fellowship in the outward glory only, when our co-heirship shall be seen, but (much above this) a present investing with the glory of Jesus—"The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." May Enoch be your pattern, so far as you have any earthly pattern, who walked with God, and was not.

I have learnt lately much of the value of a life of communion with God. *Close* communion, and nothing else, should content us, though the flesh has no glory in it, and therefore would fain, as Satan also, pour contempt upon it, and lead us to any or every other object. Yet why should hurry or perturbation be our badge, if indeed we have Christ as our anchor within the veil?

Again I would say, May the unction which you have received abide in you. I feel a great jealousy about you, that you should have much communion, much interchange of thought, with God. It is easy to run here and run there, to speak to this one and that one; but how much may be will-worship of our own inventing, not growing up out of, not appointed us by, the Spirit.

May the Holy Ghost be your life! You know much of truth as to the Person and work, past, present, and future, of Jesus, embodying the moral character of Him with whom we have to do. I would desire to see your mind brought by the Holy Ghost into nearer and closer contact with that character thus exhibited, inhaling the sweet fragrance of the garden of the Lord.

As a brother I write freely. Satan has tempted you, will tempt you, to be unwilling to be subject to vanity. Remember this, that one of the Lord's great objects is, to show that *He* keeps us; therefore we are subject to vanity. To pride it is humbling to have to give so much

time to sleep, to rest, to food, even to prayer, to say nothing to the littleness of life. Yet *these* are our glory, because His will.

Be much found in needlework for the poor, or some such littleness of female domestic life; for our glory is to do His will. The saint who is used by Him through sickness of body to draw forth the love of others, is as much honoured as a Paul or a Peter. But we have wretchedly ceased to have His will within us, and consequently how wrongly do we judge by man's thoughts, instead of God's. G. V. W.

Extracts from Letters written in 1864.

My heart has its cravings as to——, not for your sake, not for his sake either, but for the Lord's glory, and the manifestation of His grace as superabounding over all difficulties, and getting to Himself a great name among His people, and before principalities and powers in heavenly places.

What a place we are in, to be called to live to God and to Christ down here on the earth. All our own wants and affairs so entirely taken care of by God in heaven, that we are free to live to Him.

It was so, my dear Mrs. ——, as to your thoughts of the answer we were to have to your prayers about my dear comrade in the wilderness. He knows best, and He took her from weakness and trial here below, and we must bow. At first I did bow, and through grace at once too, but that was all I could do. Of late my mind has been

tracing, and I trust learning of Him, more of His thoughts and ways; and if the privation to me be not diminished, I can trace more of the goodness and tender love of His ways, and how strong His arm to have its own way. I do desire to say henceforth, "This one thing I do."

February 3rd, 1866.

DEAR SISTER IN THE LORD,—I find it difficult to advise, in the sense of saying to any one, Do this or do that at any given time, or in any given set of circumstances. But a remark or two as to what would be my own guidance under the circumstances may even, though apparently vague and general, yet tend to help you.

For myself I find that I have always to "obey God," to subject myself, that is, to His known will. If in any case that springs up, I am convinced that so or so is His will, I would desire, in dependence upon Him, to take up my cross and do it. But as it must be *His will* that I do (for the virtue is not in my *doing something* or *anything*, but in my being subject to His will as known to me), if I am not clear in my own conscience when alone with Him, that I know what His will is, I would rather wait on until I do know, and can say this or that is His will. If my faith is lively, and I am really abiding near Him, I shall see His will early perhaps. If my faith is weak, or my own heart is clouded, or circumstances of the assembly of God, or circumstances of any kind, obscure my sight, I prefer humbling myself under His mighty hand, and tarrying His leisure, to walking forward without the ability of saying, "In this that I do, I *think* that I have the Lord's mind." I, of course, can enter into the difficulties to which you refer in your note, but I do not

see your path; I do see that I can pray for you, and look to Him for light and guidance for you. How good is the Lord! He not only saves us from Satan and the world, but so exercises our hearts and minds (as we pass along the Red Sea to Jordan), that we get formed, even in habit, to the ways and thoughts of His love, and in the very difficulties we find in the way are made to love the more the home to which He guides us, where His will alone is done, and where, too, we know that there will be no distracting circumstances to perplex us or make us have to wait.

I do commend you to God, and to the word of His *grace*, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

Ever truly and prayerfully
Yours in Him,
G. V. W.

September, 1867.

MY DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD,—Perfection must be looked for in God; He alone is perfect, and in Him is Jesus, in whom alone man can trace what is divine. That blessed One, when down here, was wont to see everything on God's side of it. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Cup of wrath against man's sin held in Satan's hand before Him! and He saw nothing but His Father's gift! Death, judgment, wrath! He would not see anything apart from His Father's gift, and to Himself. And if my God put it into my heart to come out here in June, and into my wife's heart to urge me to go, and show her love to the Lord's saints, would it become me, even had He taken her away in England, to judge by the sight of the eye or the hearing of the ear,

and to repine, not seeing the Father's hand and His love, and love to me in any, in every sorrow? *No;* now is the time to give up self; Christ's presence will be the place to have giving up of self owned in.

Forty years have I known her; thirty-seven years have I seen the motto of her life to have been, "It is right for me to devote myself to God, and to His saints, while here on earth." Thirty-two years of that time it has been mine to seek to shelter her as my companion. He said, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." Did I love His gift to me? and shall I repine if she was put into fuller, greater blessing, made to feel how right her self-denying devotedness is counted in heaven? Selfishness and materialism would stir the storm of passion, and feebleness of human feeling might quiver, and the divine taste of death, as the Lord took it into His own soul in John xi., would lead to deepness of sorrow too, unselfish sorrow; but above it all, if "Christ is to be magnified in my body" by life, the Spirit being in me, I should still say, "I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth," and "The cup which the Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

We are poor things, poor vessels, to have such treasure as we carry in us; but "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

She fell asleep at 10.10 p.m., September 12th, 1867.

Heaven is not changed, nor has her admission into the presence of my God cast a spot nor any dimness or shade there. He who chose to reveal Himself to her, who forced her to own His death, and Himself, alive in heaven, coming again to fetch us, had a right to take her there; and He comforts my heart with the truth of her being there, let into His presence. Our prayer was,

that "Christ might be magnified" in her body and in mine, "whether by life or by death." She was selected for the one; may I find grace for the other; saints keeping me by prayer. The last two Lord's-days, wishing neither "to despise the rod, nor to faint under it," I abstained from preaching, dear B—— being here; but now I would be like David, and spoke last night at the room on "God, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort."

The interment takes place (D.V.), Monday (the undertaker having this morning changed the time). Dear J. N. D. had settled to come for it on Tuesday, the day first appointed, but now he cannot be here (as we have exchanged telegrams). All this is well—his proposing to come, and the preventing cause too. It will prevent his exhausting himself by a three days' journey too.

My salutation,

G. V. W.

Montreal, October 1st, 1867.

MY DEAR ——, A line will, I am sure, be welcome to you; and so far as that line treats of tender mercy and loving-kindness shown from God, through Jesus Christ and by His Spirit, to one whom I loved, to write it is praise to God, a rendering to Him the acknowledgment of the mercy and grace which He has shown.

She rests, absent from the body and present with the Lord; and His manner of loosing the cords that bind, in this life, body and soul together, and of His gathering up to His own presence, was a master-work of gentleness and tenderness.

Seeing how, as our pilgrim course lengthened out, her sense of weakness and littleness grew upon her, and strengthened her timidity and retiredness, I had each

summer of late proposed to her to accompany me *alone* in my work—Southampton one year, Aberdeen another, &c.; and when dear Mr. Darby's illness was heard of this year (Guelph), at first she hesitated to accompany me, next day accepted the thought, and then declined, her own feebleness and the need of preparation to accompany me this September to Barbadoes (D.V.) her plea; but most heartily did she urge my coming. Soon after my arrival, I found that Mr. D—— intended going to Barbadoes in December. This, after prayer, led me to postpone my going thither, and to my proposing to stay and work in America till December, and then to my writing to say that, as Lady Robinson was returning hither in August, she might, as saints here so much wished it, come out. I said I would not come to fetch her, only because I feared that my doing so might induce her to come while her inclination might be against so doing.

When my letter reached her, she was very ill from liver and some mucous membrane attack; but the worst symptoms yielded to rest, diet, and exercise, or seemed to do so, though her judgment seemed formed that her days were now markedly numbered.

She decided to come, per *Belgian*, 15th August, and reached Quebec on the 27th. She had but one thought about the coming, and that was that it was the counsel of God for her and His most tender mercy to herself. Pitiful was He in the ship, and in a thousand unheard of ways. The *little* sea-sickness proved, I think, how out of order the system was. I met her, daughter, and maid at Quebec, and we came on in the same boat hither. The kind B——'s had prepared airy rooms in the college for us, and we were cared for in love. Two weeks and four hours after her being carried up into her room from the ship she

passed away, as if falling asleep, after twenty-four hours of watchfulness.

To me she was communicative in this fortnight as to what God had wrought *for* her in Christ, and *in* her in enabling her to bow to God as the reconciler. (2 Cor. v. 20, 21 as to Psalm xxxii., Rev. i. 5, 6 as to 1 Thess. iv. 15, 17.) "That is mine; God has given it to me," she said when I spoke of it—as to the unchangeableness of God and Christ, as to her own self having been forced out of the world and self-righteousness, &c., as to how much He had blessed and taught her between June 15th and August 27th; shown her too that He had, in love, to judge her ways, the discovery too of the daughter being a far better prop to her than her husband in things of this world, and *turning from him* to her in all cases, her self-judgment, occupation with all whom she loved, and urging her husband to write for her to this and to that one, and her care about her poor, were remarkable. Not long after her arrival there was, during a day and a half, an attack of inflammation, and from that she rallied not, save in measure; it was not acute pain, but distress. My being here, and not in routine work, left me free to be much with her; and my feeling that the Lord's rod was stretched out upon me, made me decline preaching on both Sunday nights, as another was ready. These evenings I spent in her room.

On the 12th, she had had no sleep during the night, but was moved at morn to another bed; no suffering, but exhaustion and weakness, and a frequent asking for beef-tea, and brandy and water in a teaspoon, as she sat up. At 7.30 p.m. I took my papers to her room, and prayed by her several times that Christ might be magnified in her body and mine, whether by life or death. Faintness

came on as once before, but yielded to ordinary reliefs, and she fell asleep, dozing at first, then into deeper sleep; and about 10, while I and Mrs. B—— were beside her, she breathed heavily. I fetched the daughter, who had gone to rest, so as to relieve me at 1; and she ceased to breathe at 10.10.

From the peculiarity of her mind, and my knowledge of it, I went through an agony, lest Satan should be permitted to make an inroad; but, thank God, the agony and the wrestling, the fear and the watching, and the strong crying in prayer, fell to me as my portion, and not in the least to her.

She is one who will be better known in heaven than on earth—a woman of a meek and lowly spirit.

Forty years I knew her; about thirty-two been the one that tried to shelter her, as she tried to help me by prayer. I expect no one to be able to estimate her grace, Christ's grace in her; but she is with Him who loved her, gave Himself for her and to her, fought with her till she bowed to His being all in all, and He now makes her happy. He will bring her again, for we are to be together there where "we *are* ever with the Lord" can be said. It is right for *me* to be wholly and altogether devoted to God and to His people on earth. If that was the characteristic of any one, you could understand how, after thirty-seven years' life, when the thought of leaving domestic quietness, and going with a husband to West Indies, and then going out to Canada to join a husband there, got upon the mind, she passed through all sorts of exercises as to domestic retirement not having been devotedness to God; and how, as the mind got formed for new work, it got a new energy. This was of God, a ripening up at the close.

The great love of saints in England; the visits of a

Mary L——, Mrs. C——, &c.; the many kind letters; the prayers for the work of J. N. D——, for her husband, for the going forth of a wife and daughter and maid; the interest in the voyage which J. N. D—— and saints far and wide in the Canadas and United States took in it; the godly reception at Quebec and Montreal—everything done as unto the Lord—all put the soul into a state in which were tasted *afresh* the sweets of the pilgrim missionary work in earlier days of her youth in Ireland, &c.

The mind, too, expanded, and many a private habit of thought dropped. "I used to think *that* in myself; but God in His circle where I am thinks *this*."

Her age, 55 all but a few days. G. V. W.

Cambridge, Mass., U.S., January 7th, 1868.

* * * Here, necessarily, progress is a matter of grace entirely; for errors of the worst kind and worldliness have found liberty and equality in the flesh a fine soil to grow in. It has pleased God to let the nature of that soil be shown out, and how very productive of poisonous weeds and of corruption the mixture of "liberté, egalité, fraternité" is as a soil; not *so* bad here as in France at the Revolution, in measure, perhaps, because *there* Romanism and Jesuitism were the religious orders of the day. Here the Bible is open, and there is a seed which fears God, and would walk with Him; yet really the Lord's heritage, such as He can own it—His Simeons, and Annas, and Marys—are in a low state, while a popular preacher would be run after by ten thousands. Still, He has His reserved ones—it may be seven thousand, as of old—and He is calling out one here, and a second there, and a third in another place. This does not discourage me at all, per-

haps because I am a slow-minded one myself, but also in measure because I am sure He knows what He is about, and has more heart to bless than have I or have any of us; and He knows, too, the real state of hearts and minds, and the end from the beginning.

To a new-comer, things in detail are very strange here. At a meeting ten days ago there were "Adventists," "Millennium men," "Holders of the second coming." This sounded hopeful; but my first text, 1 Thess. iv., the "for ever with the Lord" was negatived. "I know no promise," said one of them, "but for the earth and in the land;" and with a great knowledge of broken bits of Scripture which they had, I had to ask them whether Christ were God or mere man, and to take my stand upon atonement. Last Monday, again, another was at another place, trying to make a gospel a rest and a hope of the Sabbath-day in Eden. Of course, the question of separation from evil inside the house is looked upon as bigotry of the worst kind. Universalists, who make all to be saved; Annihilationists, who put the wicked hereafter into non-existence; and Spiritualists, who consider inspiration to be the flow of thought in themselves, which, though it come from Satan, they accredit with God's name and sanction—of course cannot see holiness without which no man shall see God. On the other hand, in the herds of these there are many there through *ignorance*, whom God brings out —His name be praised—one and one at a time. The church's rule here is to turn off the pastor when he ceases to be young and lively enough to be engaging to the young. The rising generation have a ruling hand in everything, and their likings rule to an extent which would be folly if it were not sin.

G. V. W.

Extracts from Letters.

WE are hardly up to the mark as to walking with God down here; walking as the Lord walked.

I see this abundantly in myself as to, and under, the privileged departure of my daughter. The iron may enter into the soul—and it does in my case, and that of us all in this departure—but there should be no surprise. For two or three years she has been in work as a nurse, and been exposed in worse forms to that which the Lord was pleased to remove her by. I think she had counted the risks, and this was not the one she deprecated.

Perhaps it is my want of girdedness which makes me feel that others are not girded up, ready to depart at any moment. She and I had a talk, after I had spoken at North Row, on 1 John iii. 16, and I found her mind thoroughly made up, at least so far as the theoretic and practical parts of the question.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

ON Sunday, February 26th, 1871, I spoke at the table on Romans v. 7, 8, and 1 John iii. 15. I was struck much at what I said, and so were others; it was cutting, like a two-edged sword. She had taken up nursing, and was quite prepared to lay down her life for the brethren; and it would not have been like her to have retreated, had one known the issue beforehand, but of course *that* one could not have known. She said lately, "I hope I shall not be taken away in small-pox." On my saying, "It is as good a chariot of fire as any other," she said, "Oh, but for me to

know you were sitting at the foot of my bed unable not to loathe the sight of me, would be painful indeed!" To me it seems as if the Lord were pleased to permit her to go on high through laying down her life in nursing those dear to Himself. Why am I to allow my loss and privation to be of more importance than His pleasure?

At six o'clock on Saturday, a.m., I judged that He meant to take her, and all that I could say was, "If so, give me grace to glorify Christ about it, and I will not repine, nor ask her back." He did not ask me to do what He asked Abraham as to Isaac, yet which He afterwards told him not to do, because He alone would give up His only Son for us; but all He asks is, "Will you bow to My hand? Will you accept the correction of the chastening at My hand? Will you let Me bless your child in My own way?"

I DO want help from the Lord that I may glorify Christ in the matter practically, as He would have me. I have said to His Father, "I justify Thee in every step of the way. I accept it at Thy hand, and I thank Thee for it." But there is, besides subjection, the present energy of the Spirit to come out with vital energy. I hope you will sympathise, therefore, more with the Lord and His honour, than with me and my feelings. Let G. V. W. be reckoned crucified, dead, and buried, but let there be more of Christ displayed in me as "quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places."

YOU have heard that it has pleased the Lord to permit my daughter to go on high, through nursing the sick. It has pleased Him, and verily I would not, if I could, have

said Him nay; nor when the Lord came in and claimed her, would I count that I ought to have been consulted or thought of. I bless God I can say to Him, "Only enable Thou me to glorify Christ in the matter, and I will not wish her back, nor say Thee nay." I am old, the Lord is the Ancient of days, and He can help me on.

Ps. xl. 8: "The volume of the book," said by the Jews to be *par excellence* the law, or book of the law—literally, "the roll of the writing." The same two words occur together, Jer. xxxvi. 2, "A roll of a book," and verse 4, (read the chapter), and Ezekiel ii. 9.

MY DEAR MRS. H——,—As found in Psalm xl. 8, I should explain "The volume of the book," by the principle of 2 Peter i. 20, "No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation;" *i.e.* God, in writing His word, has ever had His Son, and Him the end and centre of everything, before Him. As the winding of string supposes a roller to wind it upon, so Christ ever was the central thought and end of every revelation. A greater than Adam the first, or than Abel, or Noah, or Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—than Israel as the vine out of Egypt, than Moses or Aaron, than David or Solomon, was before God when He wrote about them severally.

The same passage occurs in Heb. x. 7 as in Ps. xl. 7, and, as in the mouth of the rightful owner, brings to one's soul such enlargement of thought and truth, as Eph. i. 4, "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world;" Titus i. 2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" and 2 Tim. i. 9, "Grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," &c.

As to Ps. xl., no one could have said, without qualification, verse 1, or verse 4, or verse 8, or verse 10, but a perfectly righteous one.

These are the few thoughts I have to offer.

Affectionate regards to Mr. H—— and all your circle. I am be-colded just now, and using my Sunday night for communion by letter, while a brother is preaching in my stead.

I have had two most blessed instances of the Lord's answers to prayer these last six months. One of a notorious infidel in the great world in London, for whom I have prayed for forty years on and off, and done battle with him as to his infidel scoffings. Now he is a wonder to himself; brought round by the Lord alone. The other the husband of a friend. He got into Walkerite doctrine, and lost every trace of godliness and piety; but his soul has been visited by the Lord. He, too, has been the subject of much prayer.

I feel it important and right to make such cases known, for relations' and friends', children's and parents' sake—that all of ours may remember the smitten Rock's waters are gushing freely. It is a hard case if we can find no empty vessels to set before Him.

Most truly and affectionately yours,

G. V. W.

January 8th, 1871.

June 28th, 1871.

MY DEAR ——, I have endeavoured to care for the Lord's glory, and prayed that Christ may be made more apparent to everyone in both you and your dear mother,

in the sufferings you have had to pass, with the Lord, under of late.

I did not write with pen to any of you, but I tried to speak to Him that loved you both, and came off the throne to die for you; and what I asked was, that He Himself should be glorified in you. A nice letter from C—— reached me on Saturday. He had heard of my passage under sorrow, and looked at it quite as I wished all my young friends to look at it, that whatsoever the trial, none befalls us but what is common to man, and that the Lord can make His love to superabound above anything trying.

Yes, if heaven is open, upon us all shines in the light of His love; and if one asks of any trial, "And what does it appear in Christ's eye?" more still than that it shines will appear.

I snatch a moment to write to you in, but I oft find you and your father and mother upon my heart of late.

Most affectionately,

G. V. W.

Demerara, British Guiana, South America,
November 24th, 1871.

MY DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD,—My heart has been stirred within me, deeply stirred both as a child and servant of God, by scenes through which I have just passed. God our Father would, according to the word of His grace, have the testimony about His Son preached everywhere here on earth.

I have just passed among the various West India Isles belonging to various nationalities, some to the Dutch, some to the French, some to the Spaniards, Portuguese, English,

with no small addition to the number of their inhabitants of Germans, Swiss, &c.

But where has the preaching of the gospel of Christ in simplicity been in any of these isles? Has the gospel in its simplicity been preached anywhere in those islands in this generation in English, French, or Dutch? In no case, as far as I can hear, though in some of them there are estimable men of the Moravians, and strong partizans of Wesley, &c. The Roman Catholics are wide awake, and the Ritualists of the Establishment in England are playing into their hands (as said the Pope), like the bells in the tower calling people in, but not coming themselves. What can be done? If too old and feeble myself for much of the work and service, yet my heart stirs me with faith in God and His grace, to pray Him to send forth labourers for the work. And when I look back to His answers to prayers made in bygone times for France, Switzerland, Prussia, Scotland, Ireland, England, America, my heart says boldly, "Prayer now for these islands will not be in vain."

I desire too to stir up all those who are spiritually interested in the gospel as a testimony flowing from God, whether they be young or old, men or women, English or French or German, &c., to join in prayer for the sounding out of the Word throughout the world. If the Lord will graciously pour out a spirit of prayer and supplication (surely, I would say to all who love Him, the desire that He may do so is yours and mine, and the promise is to the prayer of two or three), expectation of blessing will spring up, and bear fruit too. The isles I have named, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the East Indies, are on my heart. Nor you, nor I, could *send* anyone, even if any were ready to go, but we know the Lord of the

harvest, and gladly shall we welcome His answers to prayer, and seek to comfort ourselves, and any whom He may incline to go. When Isaiah had had his iniquity taken away and his sin purged (chap. vi. 7), he heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (*v.* 8.) His ready answer was, "Here am I, send me." Oh, that that voice, which speaks in every pardoned soul who loves the gospel, "Who will go for us?" were more simply heard and obeyed as by Isaiah of old! The night is now far spent, the dawn draws nigh. The testimony as to Christ should go forth everywhere, and from every one of His. Testimony to Him in His past, in His present, in His coming service to God, and as to man. How few *addict* themselves now-a-days to the ministry of the saints. (1 Cor. xvi. 15.) How few having believed therefore speak. (2 Cor. iv. 13.) Compare Acts viii. 4: "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." If, as I trust it is, God who puts these thoughts and desires upon my soul, I may stay my soul upon Him, and hope as to blessing to come. The Son is to be preached everywhere; the Spirit works toward this, and will work (see Rev. xxii. 17); and is there no chaste virgin espoused to Christ? It is written, "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Pray. None who can pray, can say, "As for me, I can do nothing in this matter." That the *service* in this testimony requires men in Christ, and not babes, is true.

But there are evangelists who have been tried, and approved themselves in their work. Let them bethink themselves of their work.

For myself, if the Lord permit me (who came out in my

old age with none save Himself with me) to return to London, gladly shall I communicate all I can, in information, and to any that may inquire. The step needs faith to be ready to walk with God, if needs be alone. "But I am with you," saith the Lord, "to all such."

Ever yours, &c.,

G. V. W.

P.S.—It is but in Jamaica, Barbadoes, Demerara, that we know of any who would welcome to their homes and the table, any evangelist.

3, Howley Place, Harrow Road, London, W.,
April 5, 1872.

MY DEAR SISTER IN THE LORD,—Amid a whole forest of difficulties and impediments to writing, my heart has carried its purpose and desire to write to you. I had just got in measure free to do so, when B——'s note, containing a copy of J——'s, reached me, and, shortly before it, the news of ——'s death by cholera.

The battle-field of life! But, thanks be to God, no uncertainty upon it, to those that believe God's word, either as to themselves or as to those who, through Jesus, sleep in Him.

It is only by the Spirit of God's presence with us that we have received power to say, "I am Christ's," and "Christ is mine." It is His presence, personally, with the new nature given to us, that is our power of feeding upon such truth as, "Go tell My brethren, Behold, I ascend to My Father, and your Father; to My God, and your God." I find it important to keep very distinctly before the mind,

that fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, is only for us in the New Creation. In that, nothing breaks down; in that, there is no unshipping of anything in the storms or hurricanes of providential or governmental kingdoms. Yea, the very effect of the slaughter of the sheep, killed all the day long, is but to realize more and more, that the threads of life are in that which cannot be cut, the root and source of life, Christ Himself, in glory at God's right hand. "I, yet not I, but Christ" (Gal. ii. 20), is one of Paul's own peculiar expressions. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The "*I*" that was crucified together with Christ, and died together with Him, is what I was—a creature made for its Creator's glory and praise, but in its lapsed condition living from itself, and by its own power, and to itself—this I reckon dead; the I, yet not I, is myself as part of the New Creation. My selfishness is bowed before the love of Him, who gave up glory in heaven, on the throne, to become a man to die for us—who lives, and in love thinks of us,—a living Man in heaven, and whose love will find its own expression, when He presents us to Himself a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. In God's love in giving Christ, and in Christ's love in enduring all for us, selfishness in us finds its death-blow, as well as sentence. But Romans vi. goes further, because it not only makes an appeal to our hearts' affections, but shows God's thoughts and counsels, and His view of Christ's death; that He, occupied with Christ's death, counts me dead who believe in Him; and that I am bound to count or reckon myself so too. Now this meets the difficulties of the greatest and of the least of us. We that believe have been brought out of that system in which self is looked at as everything, into

another, in which Christ is looked at by God, and us too, in Him, the alone One. He only is the fountain, stream, end of all God's good pleasure, but we get our place both in Him before God, and with God in His thoughts about Him; for the Spirit is in us.

However little I am among men, or among the saints of God, or you, the question with God is, Is Christ magnified in us, and in our bodies, whether it be by life or by death? A slave might do this in the midst of slavery—live as rejoicing in Christ, as using His resurrection power (2 Cor. x. 11), in all the details of the life of a slave, and do it all *to* Christ. An apostle might not succeed so well as the poor slave in this. For what is characteristic distinctively of an apostle, was, to have seen the Lord, and be one sent by Him as a messenger for the Lord's own self. Paul had not life—eternal life in Christ, *more* than had Phœbe or Onesimus.

Now it is just in possessing, and walking in this life, that *you* can magnify Christ in *your* body, whether it be by life or by death. The dewdrops on the trees and flowers can reflect the light of the rising sun; you in your retirement and suffering, bereavement and hidden life, can live unto God through Christ. This is just what I referred to, when I spoke to you of glorifying God and Christ in the furnace. However little you are, the thread, the pulse of eternal life, the knowledge of Christ who was crucified, and who arose, and lives up there in heaven, is possessed by you; and now He is coming again shortly, and if these things become the power of your life down here, if you walk down here as seeing, and waiting upon Him who is up there, He will be magnified in your body by your walk.

All the glory of Christ, who is the image of the invisible

God, is unveiled to us, and the tiniest of us can reflect Him; can shine as Himself.

My dear child, I pray for you, that Christ may be lived to by you. Excuse haste, for interruption upon interruption has been mine. Tell your mother I hope to write to her.

Your brother and fellow-servant,

G. V. W.

Uttoxeter, July 20th, 1875.

BELOVED IN THE LORD,—I received your letter and the welcome news of J. T——, when out in New Zealand, but, though I put it to be a memorial of a letter from me to you, poor memory was not helped amid the pressure out of measure at the time upon me.

Since I have been back I have had another letter on the same subject from Mrs. W. T——, to the same effect as the other, but written at a later date. Of one thing we may be sure, that prayer works its own answer, obedient dependence to God, and *that* displayed even only in a groan or a sigh, never is forgotten by Him who is on high; it goes up, and in, with the savour of Christ upon it, and the remainder from us of what grace has already done for us in Him, and by the Spirit, and we may, and must, trust and hope on still.

I heard of your wife's weakness in body soon after my arrival. I am here feeble enough, but happy in the Lord; though able to do but little, able both to suffer and to give Him thanks for every bit of His dealings.

I think to be up farther north in my cruise, but *when* I know not; yet I trust in His "now." And if so, I may challenge you as to your being "*at home*" to me at that time. I have no plan or chart which I knowingly have

drawn up or accepted, but wish to hang on upon Him still.

The last letter which I heard of from J. N. D. came last week from Springfield, *en route* (D.V.) for England, *via* San Francisco, New Zealand, and the United States. In a parenthesis, "I see nothing as to Australia," or words to that effect. (McA—— named it to me.)

The days are solemn, but with much to encourage the hearts that trust in God, wrought in them as saints. But the testimony should go forth as to the character of grace, as to the coming of our Lord, as to the saints' life and walk—so I judge—in a way now which none but God can cause it to do so.

My kind love to dear Mrs. H——. Your daughter, whom I met in London, invited me to come and see you.

Affectionately,

G. V. W.

July 21st, 1876.

MY DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD,—The Master keeps me so much as a personal attendant on Himself, and the full work He gives me just now to do, that as a servant I have no liberty to put in or leave out any word.

This does not change your loving invitation or my sense of it, though it puts it out of my power to profit from it. I send you a copy of what S—— sent to me from Sydney lately. It is not poetry,* but was my answer to his (G. S. S——'s) request for an answer to Pearsall Smith's tracts.

Ever affectionately,

Your fellow-servant in the Christ,

G. V. W.

* This little poem has often been printed; but it is added here for the sake of those who may not have seen it.—ED.

PERFECTION.

O Man! God's Man; Thou peerless Man!
Jesus, my Lord! God's Son:
Perfection's perfect in its height,
But found in Thee alone.

Of Abba's love—of God's great claims—
Thou com'st not short at all;
Perfect in everything art Thou
Alone, since Adam's fall.

O matchless, peerless Man! shall we
Begrudge to Thee this praise?
Perfect alone, Thou cam'st in love,
To glory us to raise.

Peerlessly spotless Man! 'twas Thou
The wrath did'st bear for me,
Peerlessly righteous Man! I'm made
God's righteousness in Thee.

Peerlessly glorious Man! how soon
Shall I be like to Thee?
Thy very glory then reflect,
Thy perfect beauty see.

G. V. W.

Sydney, June 14th, 1877.

Your letter comforted me. Any one standing by, and not in the eddying whirl that another may be in, can often see that which the weak one in the eddy cannot see—some grace and mercy of the Lord's, the very naming of which is responded to by the other. I am such a poor, weak thing, that often nothing but the dire necessity of the case forces me on, to make me stand firm. Oft I am

firm because I have to say, "To whom shall I go, Lord, but to Thee?" and often, when inclined to be still, the truth is that the mass is perishing for the lack of the clear gospel, or the saints are asleep as to the return of the Lord Jesus, force me to make an effort.

Certainly we are on the flat that runs down to the end, and certainly we ought to seek to get every child of God into the light of His coming. Jesus Christ is coming back! What tremendous changes must take place on earth, in the heavenlies, in heaven and in hell below! And all we here, who know all this, and know the bearing upon Christendom and men it, surely we may well look up to be enabled to speak a word to those around. And it is in the light of that great action of God that the Christian sees light. If He is coming back, how did He leave His Church? If He is coming back, how did He leave His people? and are they where He left them? The Holy Ghost was the Guardian or Paraclete on earth: where is He? He has not gone away; but those put under Him have slipped away from hallowed ground, down into the world and flesh and Satan, and Satan has blinded their eyes as to the insults and griefs put upon the Spirit.

On the other hand, how blessed a thing that we have not to preach man's failure, but how, notwithstanding all that man has done, God remains God still—His Son as bright as ever, His humiliation, obedience, death, resurrection, and ascension remain as important as ever. Expiation is accomplished for the believer in Him on the throne—Himself alive from the dead, in heaven until He rises up to come and fetch His people thither, and the Holy Spirit here to vindicate and make good the claims of the Lord Jesus over sinners and saints.

The Lord is good, and doeth good. The conviction grows deeper and deeper in my soul, that the Lord is coming quickly, and that the Father and God is separating a people down here to meet Him at His coming. Happy they who, alive and seeing Him, are able to say, "This is our God; we have waited for Him." And if I love any down here, no wish can be so good for them as that they may be ready in heart, and in their circumstances, to welcome Him—have nothing about them practically inconsistent with the hope, and be unworldly, so that they can amalgamate with the scene then opened to them.

The body will be changed, and all its death lost; but beside this, we may be in such a state as to find nothing lost but that which we had curbed and struggled against. Selfishness, for instance, cannot cross the border, nor self-confidence, nor self-complacency. But these, however, may have got the mastery of us here, and if so they are our plague and vexation now (for the root is in us, ever ready to crop up); but when He comes, no law of sin in our members to be watched and kept under!

If we are not victors now, here, over these and every thing unlike and contrary to the Lord, humbling will be the first thought—or if not first, for the power of the presence of Christ must be *that;* but the second thought—humbling is the folly which had kept us going on still with the old self, and allowing it liberty. But besides this blessedness being surely the blessing of those for whom He comes, there is another truth; and that is, He ought to have a people waiting for Him—and the Father must think He is worthy of this. The close of the book of Revelation (xxii. 16–20) always leaves the impression on my soul that there are to be such. Some would build on this the needs-be for a lapse of time between to-day

and the time when such a people (not now found on earth) could be found; but this is a fallacy.

If the Lord were coming to-day at one o'clock, His Spirit could awaken thousands that are His, in one place even, to the truth, "He is coming back," and that, too, from among those who never thought about it.

They would not be at home in the subject, perhaps, nor practically their lives made ready for it; but as those to be alive and waiting for Him, they might have a child's joy in expecting Him.

Ever in Christ (for He letteth me not out of the ark),

Yours, G. V. W.

Sydney, June 29th, 1877.

MY DEAR BROTHER AND SISTER IN THE LORD,—Grace, mercy, and peace to you; I have heard that the Lord has visited you with sickness to one of your daughters, and I am sure you will not count a note to be an intrusion from one to whom you showed so much kindness in my visit to Christchurch.

What a blessed thing to us in these afflictions it is, that we have a God who loves us enough to chasten us.

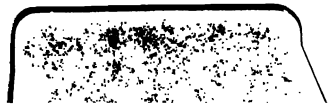
To me it has been very precious that I have for my God and Father One who is set on making me practically a partaker of His holiness, even as I am so already in Christ.

Hebrews xii. is a goodly portion, and I hear your beloved child has owned to the faith in the Lord Jesus. How well and how blessed for her! and how well and how blessed for you too! My heart looks out for a large blessing for you. Your eldest, and your second

son, are yet to be blessed, and why should one single one of your little flock not be yet in Abba's house? There is room enough there yet, and the Lord Jesus is large-hearted and ready-handed to bless. I pray for you, and for your sick one.

Affectionately, with love to each and all,

G. V. W.

END OF VOL. I.

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